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*ELIZABETHAN LONDON.*¹

BY THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

LONDON is not a good field for the exercise of historical imagination. It has grown so rapidly in modern times that its ancient features are obliterated. There is no place from which it is possible to obtain a view of London which enables you to reproduce to your own mind its past appearance. Any one who has gazed on Rome from the Pincian Hill, or has looked down on Florence from the height of San Miniato, will understand how London is destitute of an imperishable charm which belongs to places whose distinctive characters cannot be affected greatly by the results of man's activity. More than this, the most ancient parts of London are still the scenes of its most abundant life, and leave little opportunity for archaeological exploration. You can only meditate at your leisure on the dome of St. Paul's or on the top of the Monument; and it is more than doubtful if the condition of the atmosphere will allow you to find much external help for your meditations. They have to be founded on your own previous knowledge rather than inspired by any suggestions from the place itself.

My object is to try and form some imperfect picture of London as it was at the period when modern England first came into conscious being 'in the spacious days of great Elizabeth.' It was a time when the old historic capital of England still retained its ancient features, and had carried them as far as they would go. The next century saw the beginning of that process of expansion, the end of which no one can forecast.

¹ A lecture delivered at the Queen's Hall on Wednesday, November 8, at a meeting of the London Reform Union.

Now the distinctive feature of the site of London was that the original site lay on the lowest of a series of hills rolling down from the north to the banks of the Thames, while round it lay a region of marshes or lagoons, extending to the hills of Surrey. The estuary of the river Lea covered the Isle of Dogs. South London was a series of little islands. Westminster with difficulty emerged from the marshes. Pimlico and Fulham were swamps. London was built on two little hills, bounded on the west by the Hole Bourne or Fleet River, and divided from one another by the Wall Brook. I need not call your attention to the entire disappearance of these natural features. The Holborn Viaduct is the only thing that can remind you of the existence of a river valley. The parks contain the sole remaining grounds that give you any conception of the country on which London was built. So skilful has been the work of the engineer that some one remarked to me that he only learned that London was not quite level when he began to bicycle in its streets.

We must think then of the life of Elizabethan London as mostly lived within the limits of the old City walls. Its suburban district may be briefly described. East of the Tower was St. Katharine's Hospital, a college for charitable purposes, founded by Matilda, wife of King Stephen, and still belonging to the Queen of England, being, I think, her only possession. It is now removed to Regent's Park, but has left its name in St. Katharine's Docks. Beyond this a street of poor houses reached to Wapping, and was inhabited by watermen and fishermen. North of that a few houses had gathered round the White Chapel erected on the high road that led to the Old gate which we know as Aldgate. From Aldgate, outside the wall, ran Houndsditch, and the name still suggests an unsavoury memory of dead dogs which there accumulated. North of it lay Spitalfields, an open space around the dissolved Hospital of St. Mary, described as 'a pleasant place for the citizens to walk in, and for housewives to whiten their clothes.' Beside it was the Artillery Ground, reserved for military training. Moor Fields had just been drained, and formed another open space. But I can best describe to you North London by telling you that I heard a year ago of an old lady who was still alive at the age of a hundred and five, and remembered in her childhood that she went with her nurse to see the cows milked at a farm where now is Finsbury Square, and then walked through cornfields to the quiet village of Islington. Beyond Gray's Inn

the open high road went through the country to Hampstead. North of Lincoln's Inn Fields a row of houses extended to the church of St. Giles, which, with its neighbour St. Martin's, still bears the title of 'in the fields,' to indicate that with them for a long period habitation ceased. St. James's Palace stood in its park, well stocked with deer. Westminster was merely the purlieus of the royal Palace of Whitehall, the Abbey and Palace of Westminster, which was the seat of Parliament and of the Law Courts. South London was represented by the little borough of Southwark, which was incorporated with the city of London in the reign of Edward VI. Its western promenade was open to the river, and was called Bankside. It was a natural centre of amusement to the citizens of London, and the Globe Theatre on the Bankside is famous through its connection with Shakespeare.

Such, then, are roughly the boundaries of the district which your imagination has to recreate. It was a place from which it was easy to take a country walk through a lovely series of undulating hills, showing the glories of the city which lay stretched along the river below. There might sometimes be fogs to impede the view, but there was not much smoke, as the fuel used in the houses was mostly wood. The introduction of coal was forbidden as early as the reign of Edward I., 'to avoid the sulphurous smell and savour of that firing.' It was not till a little later that the increase of manufactures and the diminution of forests compelled the common use of coal.

Small as we may think Elizabethan London to be, its increase was viewed with apprehension, partly on sanitary and partly on political grounds. Royal proclamations were frequently issued forbidding new buildings. At the close of her reign Elizabeth ordered 'the pulling down of late builded houses, and voyding of inmates in the cities of London and Westminster, and for the space of three miles distant of both cities.' We are not surprised to find that in spite of royal proclamations and Acts of Parliament 'little was done, and these cities are still increased in buildings of cottages and pestered with inmates.' Alas! human affairs will never accommodate themselves to the convenience of organisation, and organisation is sorely pressed to cope with problems which it is perpetually trying to avert. Economic forces were at work which compelled the increase of London, though their full influence was only slowly felt. The troubles in the Netherlands caused a great transference of industry to England. This

establishment of new industries quickly reacted on those which already existed. There was a very rapid heightening of the standard of comfort, which created much inventiveness. When once the manufacturing impulse was given to Englishmen, they began to compete with the foreign market. I need only instance a manufactory of Venetian glass which was set up in Crutched Friars. As trade increased, the advantages of London over other ports became more apparent. The Court was now permanently fixed in London, and was an abiding attraction for those bent alike on business and on pleasure. There is a very modern tone about the following: 'The gentlemen of all shires do flee and flock to this city; the younger sorte of them to see and shew vanity, and the elder to save the cost and charge of hospitalitie and house keeping.'

We may reckon Elizabethan London to have contained at the end of the Queen's reign a population of about 250,000. Its wealth had steadily grown, and its merchants had largely prospered. London had good cause to be loyal to Elizabeth, and her constant care of the interests of commerce is one explanation of her tortuous policy. She knew that war on a great scale meant a check to industrial enterprise, whereas grave misunderstandings with foreign powers were a useful means of developing it.

But we must return to London itself and the life of its two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. The most striking difference from our own time was that villadom was unknown. The merchant lived over his place of business; the apprentices were lodged on part of the same premises. There was no great division of quarters. Noblemen, gentry, professional men, and men of business all lived in the same street, and shared a common life. The streets were not very wide, nor very commodious for traffic. The most important of them was Cheapside, renowned as 'the beauty of London.' It was broad enough to form a promenade, and was the fashionable resort. You must think of it as lined with shops which projected into the street and were open in front. Above them rose houses, built in the manner which we usually call Elizabethan, of timber and plaster. They were three or at the most four stories high, and each story projected over the lower one. This mode of building was dangerous, as it was too clearly proved later, in case of fire; and proclamations were constantly made commanding that the fronts should be built of brick; but these wise counsels were of no avail.

In a street of some width the effect was doubtless picturesque. But most of the streets were narrow lanes, and the projecting buildings from each side almost met at their top stories, making the street itself gloomy and airless. Add to this that in a time when reading was an accomplishment a shop could not indicate its nature or its owner's name by printing it in the unobtrusive manner which now prevails. It hung out a huge signboard, bearing a suitable emblem, a structure which had to be supported by stout iron fastenings. I do not think that a walk in the average street can have afforded a very exhilarating view.

The streets were badly paved, and the middle of them was little better than an open sewer. The dirt and refuse from the houses were thrown out into the street, and this was one reason for the projection of the upper stories. The pavement was raised at the two sides so as to make it possible to walk clear of too much mud. We have the trace of this state of things in a courteous habit, which I fear is now becoming old-fashioned, of always allowing a lady to walk next the wall. It was a matter of much consequence, in days when apparel was more splendid than it is now, to have the advantage of being exempted from stepping into the mire. Hence came a strict observance of precedence in giving the wall. The nature of a man's dress indicated his quality, and his quality had to be respected to preserve his clothes.

Riding was the only alternative to walking at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, and a lady never rode without six or seven serving-men to carry attire suitable to all contingencies, and the means to repair a toilette which might suffer on the journey. To diminish this cost coaches came into use. They were introduced in 1564 by a Dutch coachman of the Queen; but we are told 'a coach was a strange monster in those days, and the sight of it put both man and horse into amazement; some said it was a great crabshell brought out of China, and some imagined it to be one of the pagan temples in which the cannibals worshipped the devil.' But at length these doubts were cleared and coach-making became a substantial trade. So rapid was the increase of coaches that in 1601 an Act of Parliament was passed 'to restrain the excessive and superfluous use of coaches within this realm.' In spite of this innovation, no method could be devised which made locomotion pleasant through streets which were alternately torrents of dirt finding their way to the Fleet ditch, and thick deposits of black mud, which furnished a ready weapon to any one

who wished to express disapprobation. It is difficult for us to picture London without either cabs or omnibuses.

The natural result of this state of things was that the Thames was the silent highway of London. One bridge only spanned it, and led to Southwark. Of this structure London was justly proud. It was sixty feet high, and thirty broad. It was built on twenty arches which were twenty feet distant from one another. The bridge was a continual street covered with houses on both sides, and consequently was so narrow that carts could scarcely pass one another. We may judge of the use made of the Thames as a thoroughfare by the fact that two thousand wherries, plied by three thousand watermen, were in constant employment for purposes of transit. Barges carried passengers and brought provisions from all the home counties. The Thames was the real railway, as well as the main street, of London. It was full of fish, and was peopled by swans; so that it was a great source of food supply. It is computed that 40,000 of the population of London gained their livelihood on the river in connection with the work of transport and of fishing.

It was from the Thames that London could be seen to advantage. Westward there were no bridges to intercept the view, no streets and no embankment. The river flowed between its natural banks, from which flights of stairs led up at the chief landing-places. The Abbey and Palace of Westminster stood out against the sky, and Lambeth Palace opposite rose in solitary grandeur beside the marsh. Then came the palaces of Whitehall and the Savoy; then Somerset House, Leicester House, and other dwellings of the nobility, with their gardens extending to the river, and water-gates for easy access to the boats. The Temple was also open, and the adjoining houses of White Friars and Black Friars, though no longer in the hands of the religious, still wore something of their old aspect. Between them and London Bridge were wharves for merchandise. Over all towered the Gothic structure of St. Paul's Cathedral, a building rather longer than that which the genius of Wren erected upon its site. Round it the towers and spires of some hundred and twenty churches rose in testimony to the devotion of the people. Beyond the bridge were the Custom House, the Tower, and St. Katharine's Hospital. On the Southwark side the beautiful church of St. Mary Overies (now known as St. Saviour's) rose beside Winchester House, the town house of the Bishop of Winchester.

Along the Bankside were bear-gardens, theatres, and places of amusement.

Thus the Thames was always full of life and bustle, to which must be added also of splendour. For the barges of great nobles were magnificent, with rowers and attendants wearing blue liveries, with silver badges on their arms. Our ancestors loved pomp and state, and we are beginning to recognise that the dignity of public life needs adequate expression to the eyes of the people. The Lord Mayor's Show is a survival of the life of those times very little altered. In Elizabeth's time the Lord Mayor was rowed in his barge to Westminster to take the customary oath of office, accompanied by the barges of all the City Companies. On his return he went in procession from Paul's Wharf through Cheapside to the Guildhall. It cannot be said that civic hospitality has been able to increase in proportion to the growth of population, for in 1575 we are told that the Mayor and Sheriffs entertained a thousand persons who had accompanied them in their progress.

Let me turn to some details of municipal life. The water supply of London was of two kinds. Some houses were supplied from the Thames. Near the Bridge were erected water-wheels which were moved by the tide, so that they raised water 'by pipes and conduits so high that it serveth such citizens' houses in all parts of London as will bestow charge towards the conducting thereof.' This water can only have been used for the purposes of washing, not for drinking or cooking. A foreign traveller complains that the water was noisome, so that after washing it was necessary to put some perfume on the towel and on the hands to be rid of the foul smell. The more common source of water supply were conduits, erected in the streets, which were fed by water collected in the northern hills. A trace of these still survives in Lamb's Conduit Street, built on the fields where a worthy citizen, William Lamb, in 1577 constructed a reservoir to supply Holborn conduit, which stood on Snow Hill. The conduits themselves were stone cisterns whence water was drawn by a cock and was carried to the various houses. This was done by a body of water-carriers who formed an unruly class of the population. Once a year these conduits were visited by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen on horseback. In 1562 we find that the merry company in the discharge of this duty hunted the hare before dining at the conduit head, and after dinner raised a fox

which they killed at St. Giles's-in-the-Fields. In the reign of James I. the water supply of London was already a difficulty, as the population had definitely begun to increase. It has remained a difficulty ever since.

The subject of the lighting of London may rapidly be dismissed. There was none provided by public authority. Any one who wished to go out of doors after dark was attended by his own servants carrying torches or lanterns and armed with clubs and daggers. The streets were unsafe, as they were infested by thieves and vagabonds of every kind. They were guarded by a watch, and London possessed two hundred and forty constables who relieved one another. Shakespeare's representation of Dogberry and Verges is perhaps a satire on the watchmen; but they were not an efficient body, were easily susceptible of bribes, were not properly overlooked, and were not supported, even if they wished to be zealous, by the justices of the peace. A sober-minded man found it wisest to stay indoors after nightfall.

As regards the average houses in London, they were built without foundations, and were cold and damp. The first sign of growing prosperity and the consequent desire for greater comfort was a rapid increase in chimneys, and the provision of fireplaces. The rooms were low and ill-lighted, notwithstanding the fact that glass now replaced horn or lattice work in the windows. An Italian visitor exclaims 'O wretched windows which cannot open by day nor shut by night!' The staircases were dark and narrow, the apartments 'sorry and ill connected.' The ceilings were of plaster, often with a very beautiful design moulded upon it. The walls were either wainscoted, or more commonly were left rough and masked with 'tapestry, arras, or painted cloth,' which was hung a little distance from the wall to avoid the damp, and so formed a convenient hiding-place in case of necessity, and was always a receptacle for dust and dirt. The floors were strewn with sand, or more generally with rushes. Unless these were frequently removed they became another harbour for dirt, especially in the dining-room, where bones were thrown to the dogs beneath the table. There was no regard for what we consider sanitary precautions; and it is no wonder that the plague in some form or other was endemic. Sensitive persons carried with them something fragrant which they might smell when their noses were too powerfully attacked by unpleasant odours.

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The great glory of London was St. Paul's Cathedral, designed on a scale worthy of the dignity of the city, being 690 feet long by 130 broad. I will not attempt to describe it to you, as that would be tedious. It is enough to say that it was adorned with tombs and monuments which gave an epitome of civic life. As only the choir was used for divine service, the nave had become, in a manner which seems strange to our ideas, a place of fashionable resort, and was known as 'Paul's Walk.' There from ten to twelve in the morning and from three to six in the afternoon men met and chatted on business or on pleasure. Young fops came to study the fashions, masters came to engage servants; 'I bought him,' says Falstaff of Bardolph, 'at Paul's.' Gallants made appointments with their tailor and selected the colour and cut of their new suit. Grave elders discussed the political news. Debtors took sanctuary in certain parts and jested at their creditors to their face. Any one who especially wished to attract attention went up in the choir during service, wearing spurs. This was punishable with a fine, which the choir boys hastened to exact. All eyes were fixed upon the beau as in a studiously negligent attitude he drew out his purse and tossed the money into the boy's hand. Outside, St. Paul's Churchyard was mainly occupied by booksellers, whose shops were places of resort to those who cared to look at and discuss new literature.

A different place of resort was the Royal Exchange, built by Sir Thomas Gresham and opened by Elizabeth, who gave it its name. Gresham was a merchant who had helped the Queen by negotiating loans in Antwerp on terms beneficial both to himself and to the royal finances. I rather incline to think that his great fortune was largely due to a system of illicit commissions, which were even more frequent then than they are now. But Gresham's residence in the Low Countries led him to see that commercial life was there conducted more comfortably than in England. There was no meeting-place for London merchants. They transacted their business in the street or in St. Paul's, when their friends did not find them in their office. Gresham erected a building on the same plan as he had seen in the Netherlands—an open colonnade with shops around it, and a central hall. But though Gresham presented the Exchange to the city, he meant to reimburse himself by the rents of the shops. In this he had not reckoned on the conservative habits of English traders, and found that his shops remained untenanted. Nothing daunted, he devised a plan for

leading men into new ways. He arranged for a royal opening, and then accosted the chief shopkeepers, pointing out to them that the place looked bare and all unfit for the Queen's eye; he asked them as a favour to put a few of their wares in the empty windows. When the ceremony was over he remarked that it was a pity to take the things away at once; they were at liberty to keep them there for a time. His scheme succeeded; he established shops of his own selection, and the neighbourhood soon became fashionable. In a year's time he demanded a substantial rent, and soon afterwards, when the shops were well frequented, required that each shopkeeper should also hire a vault at the same rental. I tell you this that you may not think that our mercantile shrewdness is entirely of modern growth. As a matter of fact, when we look below the surface, we see that the days of Elizabeth were the days of hard-headed men. The religious and social changes which the country had passed through necessarily produced restlessness and disquiet. The old thrifty habits passed away, and there was a new spirit of ambition and adventure. Everywhere the wise were taking advantage of the foolish, the strong of the weak. Amongst the nobles new families were quietly adding manor to manor, by marriages, by encouraging spendthrift habits in a neighbour whom they meant to pillage, by lawsuits in which they took care to win. The merchants likewise knew how to put out their money on good security; even tavern-keepers were usurers for young men with expectations who came to London to enjoy themselves for a few months. It was all done quietly and decorously; but lands and money changed hands rapidly, and a process of natural selection was going on with merciless severity.

This is wandering from my subject, but it explains in many ways the development of London's trade. Abroad the English were taking advantage of their less fortunate neighbours and rivals in commerce. At home London was growing wealthy from the folly of adventurous country gentlemen, who were encouraged to ruin themselves and say nothing about it.

One sign of this restlessness was the extraordinary vogue of shows containing monstrosities or prodigies. A dancing horse, trained by a Scot called Banks, was long one of the great sights of London, and was celebrated by Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. Bulls with five legs or two tails, hares that could play the drum, tight-rope dancing,

a strange outlandish fowl,
A quaint baboon, an ape, an owl,

were objects of universal interest. Those who would 'not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar would lay out ten to see a dead Indian.' With this was combined a delight in savage pastimes, bull-baiting and bear-baiting. The bulls or bears were fastened to a chain and worried by bulldogs which were often killed. Still more brutal was the whipping of a blinded bear, which strove to seize its persecutors. To the same love of excitement and distaste for honest work is due the great amount of gambling which prevailed in every class of society.

This unwholesome state of feeling afforded ample opportunity to adventurers. The ruffian,

Full of strange oaths and bearded like a parl,

swaggered at the taverns and fed the credulity of his hearers with travellers' tales :

When we were boys

Who would believe that there were mountaineers
Dewlapped like bulls, whose throats had hanging at them
Wallets of flesh ? or that there were such men
Whose heads stood in their breasts ? which now we find
Each putter out on five for one will bring us
Good warrant of.

'Each putter out on five for one' is a phrase which illustrates the gambling spirit which was rife. Ben Jonson sets forth the traveller's scheme : 'I am determined to put forth some five thousand pounds, to be paid to me five for one upon the return of myself, my wife, and my dog from the Turk's court in Constantinople. If all or either of us miscarry on the way, 'tis gone : if we be successful, why there will be five and twenty thousand pounds to entertain time withal.' You will see that commercial speculation is no novelty.

Such a spirit of adventure and speculation craved for notoriety, and consequently created an informal society which had its seat in places of public resort. The life of the tavern became varied and animated, and we can appreciate its extent and influence, as well as its attractiveness in the case of Falstaff. We know the Boar's Head in Eastcheap, near London Stone, and the Mermaid in Cornhill from the dramatists ; and there were a host of others. There adventurers could float themselves without credentials, and sharpers could secure their victims. There travellers, soldiers, and seamen could relate their wondrous adventures. There men of every class could mix and interchange opinions. 'A tavern,' says

a contemporary, 'is the common consumption of the afternoon, and the murderer or maker-away of a rainy day. . . . It is the busy man's recreation, the idle man's business, the melancholy man's sanctuary, the stranger's welcome, the inns-of-court man's entertainment, the scholar's kindness, and the citizen's courtesy. It is the study of sparkling wits, and a cup of canary their book.' It has always seemed to me that the wide knowledge and accuracy of detail shown by Shakespeare are not so much due to study on his part as to his imaginative insight into his subject, which enabled him to secure readily from the expert, whom he met in the tavern, just so much information as he needed to give proper local colour to his outlined picture.

Such tendencies towards an adventurous life could not be confined to particular classes of society. They were general, and produced a large crop of rogues, vagabonds, thieves, and beggars who infested London. The Elizabethan Poor Law is due to the necessity of differentiating these from the deserving poor. It had not much success in stopping their number, nor were the severe penalties inflicted upon them more successful. 'The rude vast place of Smithfield' afforded space for harbouring them, and bore the name of Ruffians' Hall. The House of Correction at Bridewell was too small to contain the number of criminals. More than three hundred were hanged every year, but their fate struck no terror into their companions. Students of social questions, who existed then as they do now, classified these impostors, and recorded fourteen well-marked types of male villains, and nine of female. There were schools where they were taught their trade on scientific principles. All these things were made known, but to little purpose. For then, as now, every Englishman believed in his own capacity to detect an impostor for himself, and paid little heed to the warning of the expert.

In truth London was full of signs of judicial severity and precautions against riot. 'There are pillories for the neck and hands,' says a foreigner, 'stocks for the feet, and chains for the streets themselves to stop them in case of need. In the suburbs are oak cages for nocturnal offenders.' He saw a lad of fifteen led to execution for stealing a bag of currants, his first offence. There were gibbets along all the roads outside the gates. Nor was it only the poor malefactor who paid the penalty of detected crime. The headsmen's axe was busy on Tower Hill, and the great were taught to walk warily in perilous times. The heads of traitors

were impaled on London Bridge; and the first sign of growing humanity was their removal to the Southwark Gate.

A somewhat turbulent part of the community consisted of the London apprentices, who were at once recognisable in the streets. They wore blue cloaks, breeches and stockings of white broadcloth, with the stockings sewn on so that they were all one piece; they wore flat caps on their heads. They stood against the open fronts of the shops to guard their masters' wares, bareheaded, with their caps in their hands, 'leaning against the wall like idols,' says a French visitor. They were always ready for any mischief, and foreigners complained of their rudeness. They expressed only too clearly the prevailing sentiment about foreign affairs, and even the ambassadors of unpopular countries suffered at their hands. The mud of the street supplied a ready weapon. Festival days tended to become their Saturnalia, and sometimes they executed wild justice of their own. They wrecked taverns which they thought were ill conducted, and spoiled a playhouse of which they did not approve. We even find that 'they despitefully used the sheriffs of London and the constables and justices of Middlesex.' It is not surprising that James I. addressed the Lord Mayor:

'You will see to two things—that is to say, to the great devils and the little devils. By the great ones I mean the waggons, which, when they meet the coaches of the gentry, refuse to give way and yield, as due. The little devils are the apprentices, who, on two days of the year which prove fatal to them—Shrove Tuesday and the first of May—are so riotous and outrageous that, in a body three or four score thousand strong, they go committing excesses in every direction, killing human beings and demolishing houses.'

As regards apprentices, however, we find an economic cause coming into operation which slowly wrought a change. The increasing importance of commercial life was altering their position. Whereas ten pounds had been a sufficient premium for an apprentice, the payment steadily rose to twenty, forty, sixty, and even a hundred pounds. This meant that the boys came from a higher class of society, and ceased to be partly menials who carried water and performed domestic duties.

I have been endeavouring in a fragmentary and imperfect way to bring together a few illustrations of matters which either then or now had some relation to the problems connected with

the government of London or with the economic laws which affected it. I have not tried to point any definite moral, but I would leave it to yourselves to judge what progress we have made, and how we have made it. Many questions have solved themselves quietly without any direct intervention. Of others the solution has made itself so obvious that there was no doubt about it. High-handed interference, however wise and foreseeing, has mostly been productive of evil. It is even possible to assert that the greatest boon to London was the Great Fire. But on such a point, or indeed on any point, I do not wish to dogmatise.

There is one matter, however, to which in conclusion I would call your attention. We ask ourselves, What sort of men were our forefathers? The question is worth trying to answer, and can best be answered by discovering the impression which they produced on men of other nations. I will collect some opinions on that point.

In 1497 a Venetian writes: 'They have an antipathy to foreigners and imagine that they never come into their island but to make themselves masters of it, and to usurp their goods.' A Roman in 1548 writes: 'The English are destitute of good breeding, and are despisers of foreigners, since they consider him but half a man who may be born elsewhere than in Britain.' Ten years later a Frenchman testifies: 'This people are proud and seditious, with bad consciences, and faithless to their word; they hate all sorts of foreigners. There is no kind of order; the people are reprobates and thorough enemies to good manners and letters.' In 1592 a German from Württemberg says: 'They are extremely proud and overbearing; and because the great part, especially the tradespeople, seldom go into other countries, but always remain in the city attending to their business, they care little for foreigners, but scoff and laugh at them.' A Hollander bears record: 'They are bold, courageous, ardent and cruel in war, fiery in attack, and having little fear of death; they are not vindictive, but very inconstant, rash, vainglorious, light, and deceiving, and very suspicious of foreigners whom they despise. They are not so laborious as the Netherlands or the French, as they lead for the most part an indolent life.' Another German from Brandenburg says: 'They are good sailors and better pirates, cunning, treacherous, and thievish; they are powerful in the field, successful against their enemies, impatient of anything like slavery. If they see a foreigner well made, or particularly

handsome, they will say "It is a pity he is not an Englishman."

I will not go on multiplying quotations. Those which I have given show a remarkable consensus of opinion. They come from different sources, and in an age when newspapers were unknown they are independent testimonies. Perhaps we might be tempted to put them aside as prejudiced; but I hesitate to do so, because there is an agreement on a point which we would not readily surrender. All foreign observers are at one in the opinion that the English women were the most beautiful in the world. We must admit that this proves their power of discernment.

I am afraid that these testimonies show that, however much we may have improved in other things, we have not yet been successful in impressing on other countries a due appreciation of those excellent qualities which we are profoundly conscious that we possess. We have not amended our provoking insularity or our arrogant self-assertiveness—at all events in the opinion of outside critics. The men of Elizabeth's time had very little ground for their belief that the world was primarily intended for the use of Englishmen. Perhaps for that reason, they judged that it was true kindness to others to make that fact generally known. But I would point out that the unpopularity which we undoubtedly enjoy is of long standing and arose from the first expression given to the peculiarly English temper. I will only leave with you, as a subject deserving consideration, whether or no the advantages of the temper itself may not be retained with certain modifications in the form of its expression, which the experience of three centuries might allow us to make without any loss of the sense of national dignity.

NATAL MEMORIES.

BY LADY BROOME.

As I sit, sad and alone in my empty home, dreading the cries of the newspaper-boys in the streets, my thoughts often fly back to the 'Fair Natal' I knew long ago. More than twenty years have passed since I last saw it. Then, as now, it was early summer-time. The wide, well-watered stretches of veldt were brilliantly green and covered with blossom, chiefly lilies and cinerarias, the spruits were running like Scotch burns, and the dreadful red dust of the winter months no longer obscured everything. I have often, between April and November, not known what was within an approaching bank of solid red cloud, until the shouts of the unseen little 'Voor-looper' warned me that a huge wagon and its span of perhaps twenty or thirty oxen had to be avoided.

But after November, dust gives place to mud on the roads; mud of a singularly tenacious quality, formed from the fertile red clay soil. I don't believe it rains anywhere so hard as it does in Natal, and during the summer months it is never safe to part for a single hour from the very best waterproof cloak which you can procure, or from a substantial umbrella. Round Maritzburg a thunderstorm raged nearly every summer afternoon, coming up about three o'clock. But when, by any chance, that thunderstorm passed us by, we regretted it bitterly, for the oppressive, suffocating heat was then ever so much worse. Even the poor fowls used to go about with their beaks open and their wings held well away from their sides, literally gasping for breath. One was prepared for thunderstorms, even on the largest scale, when they came up with the usual accompaniments of massed clouds, rumbling or crashing thunder, and were followed by a deluge of rain; but I could not get used to what I have never seen anywhere else, and which could only be described as a 'bolt from the blue.'

A very few days after my arrival at Maritzburg at the end of 1875, I was standing one afternoon in the shade of my little house on a hill, anxiously watching the picturesque arrival of an ox-wagon laden with my boxes. It was in the very early summer,

and the exigencies of settling in left me no time to worry about the thunderstorms, of which, of course, I had often heard. A more serene and brilliant afternoon could not be imagined, and it was not even hot—at all events, out of the sun. My two small boys, as usual, trotted after me like dogs, and clamoured to assist at the arrival of the wagon; so I lifted the little one up in my arms and stood there, with an elder boy clinging to my skirts. Suddenly, out of the blue unclouded sky, out of the blaze of golden sunshine, came a flash and a crash which seemed as if it must be the crack of doom. No words at my command can give any idea of the intolerable blinding glare of the light which seemed to wrap us round, or of the rending sound, as if the universe were being torn asunder. I suppose I flung myself on the ground, because I was crouching there, holding the little boys beneath me with some sort of protective instinct, when in a second or two of time it had all passed, for I heard only a slight and distant rumble. I do not believe the sun had ceased shining for an instant, though its light had seemed to be extinguished by that blaze of fire. Never can I forget my amazement, an amazement which even preceded my deep thankfulness at finding we were absolutely unhurt, the fearless little boys only inquiring, 'What was that, Mummy?' There had been no time for their rosy cheeks even to pale. I wonder what colour *I* was. I looked at the little stone house with astonishment to find it still there, for I had expected to see nothing but a heap of ruins. Nay, it seemed miraculous that the hills all round should still be standing.

I only saw one more flash equally bad during my two summers in Natal, and that was during a thunderstorm, and was accompanied by terrific hail. Of course, I was then in a house and trying to distract my thoughts from the weather, which I knew must be annihilating my lovely garden, by dispensing afternoon tea. I am certain *that* flash came down upon the tea-tray, for when I lifted up my head (I defy any one not to cower before a stream of electricity which seems poured upon you out of a jug), I felt the same surprise at seeing my cups and saucers unshattered. I am sure they had jumped about, for I heard them, but they had recovered their equanimity by the time I had. Almost every day one saw in the newspapers an account of some death by lightning, and I know of one only too true story, in which our Kaffir washerman was the victim. He had left our house one fine Monday morning with a huge bag of clothes on his back, which he intended to wash in the

river at the foot of the hill, when he observed one of these thunderstorms coming up unusually early, and so took shelter in the verandah of a small cottage by the roadside. After the worst of the storm had passed, he was preparing to step outside, when a violent flash and a deafening thunderclap passed over the little house. The lightning must have been attracted by a nail carelessly sticking up in its shingled roof. The poor Kaffir chanced to be standing exactly beneath this nail and was struck down dead at once. I was told that he was in the act of speaking, promising some one that he would return the same way that very afternoon. The streets of Maritzburg used, in my day, to be mended or hardened with a sort of ironstone which abounds in the district, and in one of these daily thunderstorms it was not uncommon to see the electricity rising up as it were from the ground to meet the descending fluid. Of course, the rivers soon become impassable, and I have a vivid recollection of four guests who had ridden out rather earlier than usual one afternoon to have tea with me, being kept in our tiny house all night. More than one attempt was made before dark to find and use the little wooden bridge over the stream, which could hardly be called a river, but its whereabouts could not even be perceived, and the horses steadily refused to go out of their depth. So there was nothing for it except to return, drenched to the skin, and bivouac under our very small roof for the night.

And yet one is so glad of these same rains after the long dry winter, when all vegetation seems to disappear off the baked earth and the cattle become so thin that it is a wonder the gaunt skeletons of the poor trek-oxen can support the weight of their enormous spreading horns. The changes of temperature in winter were certainly very trying. The day began fresh and cold and bracing, but the brilliant sunshine soon changed that into what might be called a very hot English summer's day. About four o'clock, when the sun sloped towards the western hills, it began to grow cold again, and no wrap or greatcoat was too warm to put on then. By night one was only too glad of as big a fire on the open hearth as could be provided, for fuel was scarce and very expensive in those days. Doubtless the railway has improved all those conditions; but Natal, as far as I saw it, is not a well-wooded country, except on the Native Reserves, and the only forest—*bush* as they would call it in Australia—which I saw, cost me a fifty-mile ride to get to it!

Our poor Kaffir servants used to get violent and prostrating colds in winter, in spite of each being supplied with an old greatcoat which had once belonged to a soldier. This the master provides ; but if the man himself can raise an aged and dilapidated tunic, he is supremely happy. Anything so grotesque as this attire cannot well be imagined, for the red garment (it was almost unrecognisable as ever having been a tunic by that time) is worn with perfectly bare legs, a feather or two stuck jauntily on the head or with a crownless hat, and the true dandy adds a cartridge case passed through a wide hole in the lobe of his ear, and filled with snuff! Nor will any Kaffir stir out of doors without a long stick on account of the snakes, but only the police used to be allowed to carry the knobkerry, which is a sort of South African shillelagh and a very formidable weapon.

It always seemed strange to me that a climate which was, on the whole, so healthy for human beings should not be favourable to animal life. Dogs do not thrive there at all, and soon become infested with ticks. One heard constantly of the native cattle being decimated by strange and weird diseases, and horses, especially imported horses, certainly require the greatest care. They must never be turned out whilst the dew is on the grass, unless with a sort of muzzling nosebag on, and the snakes are a perpetual danger to them, though the bite is not always fatal, for there are many varieties of snake which are not venomous. Still, a native horse is always on the look out for snakes and dreads them exceedingly. One night I was cantering down the main street of Maritzburg on a quiet old pony on my way to the Legislative Council, where I wanted to hear a very interesting debate on the native question (which was the burning one in that day), and my pony suddenly leaped off the ground like an antelope and then shied right across the road. This panic arose from his having stepped on a thin strip of zinc cut from a packing-case which must have been opened as usual outside the store or large shop which we were passing. As soon as the pony put his foot on one end of the long curled-up shaving, it must have risen up and struck him sharply, waking unpleasant memories of former encounters with snakes.

Railways were only a dream of the near future in my day. Indeed the first sod of the first railway—that between Durban and Pietermaritzburg—was only turned on January 1, 1876, amid great enthusiasm. In my day a mail-cart made a tri-weekly trip between the two towns—fifty-two miles apart—and

that was horsed, but on anything like a journey either oxen or mules were used.

I have seen an ox-wagon arriving at a ball, with pretty young ladies inside its sheltering hood, who had been seated there all day long, having started in their ball-dresses directly after breakfast! Mules were in great request for draught purposes, and up to a point they answered admirably, jogging along without distress over bad roads which would soon have knocked up even the staunchest horses. But a mule is such an unreliable animal, and his character for obstinacy is thoroughly well deserved. When a mule, or a team of mules, stops on a particularly sticky bit of road, no power on earth will move him, and there is nothing for it but to await his good pleasure. I have, two or three times, journeyed behind a team of sixteen mules, and I always suffered great anxiety lest they should cease to respond to the incessant cries of their 'Cape-boy' driver, or the still more persuasive arguments of his assistant who bore quite a collection of whips of different lengths for emergencies. Happily the roads were then in fairly good order, and beyond a tendency to drop into a slow walk at the slightest hill, the mules behaved irreproachably.

Locomotion was the great difficulty in those days, and we island-dwellers cannot easily realise the vast and trackless spaces which lie between the specks of townships on a huge continent. Natal is magnificently watered and grassed in the summer, but the big rivers are not only a hindrance to journeying, but from a sanitary point of view they are as undrinkable as the Nile, and probably for the same reasons. Still, they are there, and future generations will doubtless use them for irrigation and canals and all the needs of advancing civilisation.

In my day the Boer was quite an unconsidered factor, and we felt we were performing a Quixotically generous action when, at his own earnest entreaty, we took him and his debts and his native troubles on our own shoulders. He was always extremely dirty and about a thousand years behind the rest of the civilised world in his ideas. His religion was a superstition worthy of the Middle Ages, and his notions of morality went a good deal further back than even those primitive times.

I hope I may not be mistaken for that un-English and unaccountable creature, a 'pro-Boer,' if I confess that the only Boer I ever was personally brought into contact with seemed to me a delightful person! This is how it happened. Soon after my

arrival in Maritzburg, a bazaar was held in aid of some local literary undertaking. Bazaars were happily of very rare occurrence in those parts, and this one created quite an excitement and realised an astonishingly large sum of money. The race-week had been chosen for the purpose of catching customers among the numerous visitors to Pietermaritzburg in that gay time, and the wiles employed seemed very successful. I never heard how or why he got there, but I only know that a stout, comfortable, well-to-do Dutch farmer suddenly appeared at the door of the bazaar. He was, of course, at once assailed by pretty flower-girls and lucky-bag bearers, and cigars and kittens were promptly pressed on him. But the old gentleman had a plan and a method of his own, on which he proceeded to act. He had not one single syllable of English, so it was a case of deeds not words. He began at the very first stall and worked his way all round. At each stall he pointed to the biggest thing on it, and held out a handful of coins in payment. He then shouldered his purchase as far as the next stall, where he deposited it as a gift to the lady selling, bought her biggest object, and went on round the hall on the same principle. When it came to my turn he held out to me the largest wax doll I ever beheld, and carried off a huge and unwieldy doll's house which entirely eclipsed even his burly figure. My next door (or rather stall) neighbour had a table full of glass and china, and she consequently viewed the approach of this article of bazaar commerce with natural misgiving, but as this ideal customer relieved her of a very large ugly breakfast set, she managed to make room for the miniature house until she could arrange a raffle and so get rid of it. The last I saw of that Boer, who must have contributed largely to our receipts, was his leading a very small donkey, which he had just bought at the last stall, away by a blue ribbon halter. I believe it was the only 'object' in the whole bazaar which could possibly be of the slightest practical use to him, but the contrast between the weak-kneed and frivolously attired donkey and its sturdy purchaser was irresistibly comic. No one seemed to know in the least who he was, but we supposed he must have come down for the races and backed the winners very successfully.

Our little house stood on a hill about a mile from Maritzburg, and, looking back on the formation of the surrounding country, one realises how badly the towns in Natal, and probably all over

South Africa, are placed for purposes of defence. Every town, or even little hamlet or township, which I saw, stood in the middle of a wide plain with low hills all round it, so it is easy for me to realise how soon cannon planted on those hills would wreck the buildings. There was a great and agreeable difference in the temperature, however, up on that little hill, but towards the close of the dry winter season the water supply became an anxiety. In spite of the extremely cold nights up there, any plant for which I could spare a daily pail of water blossomed beautifully all through the winter. I was advised to select my favourite rose bushes before the summer rains had ceased, and to have the baths of the family emptied over them every day, which I did with perfect success, and was even able to include some azaleas and camellias in the list of the favoured shrubs.

I was much struck with the rapid growth of trees in Natal, and it was astonishing to see the height and solidity of trees planted only ten years before, especially the eucalyptus. But grass walks or lawns are much discouraged in a garden on account of the facility they afford as cover for snakes, and red paths and open spaces are to be seen everywhere instead. Even the lawn-tennis of that day was played on smooth courts of firmly stamped and rolled red clay. I wonder how the golf-players manage—for play they do, I am certain, as nothing ever induces either a golfer or a cricketer to forego his game.

One morning, very early, I was taken to the market, and it certainly was an extraordinary sight. The market-place is always one of the most salient features of a South African town, and is the centre of local gossip, just as is the 'bazaar' of the East. It was an immense open space thronged with buyers and sellers; whites, Kaffirs, coolies, emigrants from St. Helena, and many on-lookers like myself. It was all under Government control and seemed very well managed. There were official inspectors of the meat offered for sale, and duly authorised weights and scales, round which surged a vociferous crowd. I was specially invited to view the butter sent down from the Boer farms up country, and I cannot say it was an appetising sight. A huge hide, very indifferently tanned, was unrolled for my edification, and it certainly contained a substance distantly resembling butter, packed into it, but apparently at widely differing intervals of time. The condiment was of various colours, and—how shall I put it?—strengths; milk-sieves appeared also to have been unknown at

that farm, for cows' hair formed a noticeable component part of that mass of butter. However, I was assured that it found ready and willing purchasers, even at four shillings a pound, and that it was quite possible to remake it, as it were, and subject it to a purifying process. I confess I felt thankful that the butter my small family consumed was made under my own eyes.

Wagons laden with firewood were very conspicuous, and their loads disappeared rapidly, as did also piles of lucerne and other green forage. There was but little poultry for sale, and very few vegetables. I remember noticing in all the little excursions I made, within some twenty miles of Maritzburg, how different the Natal colonist, at least of those days, was from the Australian or New Zealand pioneer. At various farmhouses where there was plenty of evidence of a kind of rough and ready prosperity, and much open-handed hospitality and friendliness, there would be only preserved milk and tinned butter available. Now these two items must have indeed been costly by the time they reached the farms I speak of. Yet there were herds of cattle grazing around. Nor would there be poultry of any sort forthcoming, nor a sign of a garden. Of course it was not my place to criticise; but if I ventured on a question, I was always told, 'Oh, labour is so difficult to get. You know, the Kaffirs won't work.' I longed to suggest that the young people I saw about might very well turn to and lend a hand, at all events to start a poultry yard, or dairy, or vegetable garden.

Now, at Fort Napier—the only fortified hill near Maritzburg—every little hollow and ravine was utilised by the soldiers stationed there as a garden. The men, of course, work in these little plots themselves and grow beautiful vegetables. Potatoes and pumpkins, cabbages and onions, only need to be planted to grow luxuriantly. Why cannot this be done in the little farms around? I am afraid I took a selfish interest in the question, as it was so difficult, and often impossible, to procure even potatoes. Such things grow much more easily, I was told, at Durban, so probably those difficulties have disappeared with the opening of the railway—that very railway of which I saw the first sod turned. My own attempt at a vegetable garden suffered from its being perched on the top of a hill, where water was very difficult to get; but I was very successful with some poultry, in spite of having to wage constant war against hawks and snakes.

How fortunate it is that one remembers the laughs of one's past life better than its tears! That morning visit to the Pietermaritzburg market stands out distinctly in my memory chiefly on account of an absurd incident I witnessed. I had been much interested and amused looking round, not only at the strange and characteristic crowd, but at my many acquaintances marketing for themselves. I had listened to the shouts of the various auctioneers who were selling all manner of heterogeneous wares, when I noticed some stalwart Kaffirs bearing on their heads large open baskets filled entirely with coffee-pots of every size and kind. Roughly speaking, there must have been something like a hundred coffee-pots in those baskets. They were just leaving an improvised auction-stand, and following them closely, with an air of proud possession on his genial countenance, was a specially beloved friend of my own, who I may mention was also the specially beloved friend of all who knew him. 'Are *all* those coffee-pots yours?' I inquired. 'Yes, indeed; I have just bought them,' he answered. 'You must know I am a collector of coffee-pots and have a great many already; but how lucky I have been to pick up some one else's collection as well, and so cheap too!'

The Kaffirs were grinning, and there seemed a general air of amusement about, which I could not at all understand until it was explained to me later that my friend had just bought his own collection of coffee-pots. His wife thought that the space they occupied in her store-room could be better employed, and, believing that their owner would not attend the market that day, had sent the whole lot down to be sold. She told me afterwards that her dismay was indeed great when her Kaffirs brought them back in triumph, announcing that the 'Inkose' (chieftain) had just bought them, so the poor lady had to pay the auctioneer's fees, and replace the coffee-pots on their shelves with what resignation she could command.

One of my pleasantest memories of Natal, especially as seen by the light of present events, is of a visit I paid to the annual joint encampment of the Natal Carbineers and the Durban Mounted Rifles. It was only what would be called, I suppose, a flying camp, and the ground chosen that year (August 1876) was on 'Botha's Flat,' halfway between Maritzburg and Durban. I well remember how beautiful was the drive from Maritzburg over the Inchanga Pass, and how workmanlike the little encamp-

ment looked as one came upon it (after some break-neck driving), with its little tents dotted on a green down.

Although one little knew it, that same encampment was the school where were trained the men who are showing to-day what lessons they then learned. The whole training seemed practical and admirable in the highest degree. It had to be carried out amid every sort of difficulty, and, indeed, one might almost say discouragement. In those distant days both these bodies of volunteers were struggling on with very little money, very little public interest or sympathy, and with great difficulty on the part of the members of these plucky little forces in obtaining leave for even this short annual drill. I was told that both the corps were much stronger on paper, but that the absentees could not be spared from the stores, or sugar estates, or offices to which they belonged.

It was partly to show my own sympathy and interest in the movement that I accepted the invitation of the commandant to spend a couple of nights at the camp and see what they were doing. A lonely little inn hard by, where a tiny room could be secured for me, made this excursion possible, and I can never forget some of the impressions of that visit. When I read in the papers now of how splendidly the Natal colonist has come forward, even from the purely military point of view, I remember that camp, and I understand that I was then watching the forging of those links in our long imperial chain. The men now coming out so grandly as 'soldiers of the Queen,' no matter by what local names they may be called, are probably the sons of the stalwart volunteers I saw, but the teaching of that and succeeding encampments has evidently borne good fruit.

It was indeed serious work they were all engaged on during those bright winter days, and my visit was not allowed to interrupt for a moment the drill which seemed to go on all through the daylight hours. What helped to make the lesson so valuable to the earnest learners was, that all went precisely as though a state of war existed. There were no servants, no luxuries—all was exactly as it probably is now.

I dined at the officers' mess that evening. Our table-cloth was of canvas, our candles were tied to cross pieces of wood, and the food was served in the tins in which it was cooked. Tea was our only beverage, but the open air had made us all so hungry that everything seemed delicious. It was, I remember, bitterly cold, and the slight tent did not afford much shelter from the icy

wind. How well I recollect my great longing to wrap myself up in the one luxury of the camp—a large and beautiful goatskin karosse on which I was seated! But that would have been to betray my chilliness, which would never have done. We separated somewhere about half-past eight—for we had dined as soon as ever it got too dark to go on drilling—but not before the whole encampment had assembled to sing ‘God save the Queen,’ with all their heart as well as with all their voice, a fitting finish to the day’s work.

Although my stay in Natal lasted very little over a year, I made many friends there, and it is with sympathising regret I see in the roll-call of her local defenders the familiar names of those whom I remember as bright-eyed children. They have all sprung to arms in defence of the fair land of their fathers’ adoption, and when the tale of this crisis in the history of Natal comes to be written, the names of her gallant young defenders will stand out on its pages in letters of light, and the record of their noble deeds will serve as an example for ever and for ever. So will they not have laid down their lives in vain.

A CRIMEAN MINIATURE.

MORE than forty years have passed away and a new generation has arisen since England and France were engaged in a war, which we now all agree in thinking unnecessary, with Russia in the Crimea. Other events obscure the history of those times. Nothing is eternal in this world, and the wounds and the deaths, the sufferings and tears of thousands of men and women, if not altogether forgotten, are decently put away out of sight, absorbed in the interests of the individual minute in which we are now for the moment living. If not eternal, deeds of heroism brighten afresh in our memories whenever at intervals they are recalled.

The short and dashing victory of the Alma, the mad and wild charge of Balaklava, and the dogged resistance of Inkerman can still raise a momentary enthusiasm as they gleam in the almost forgotten pages of Kinglake, who himself has passed away from the scenes of his literary triumphs.

His history has been described as a series of brilliant miniatures. May I be allowed to add one sad, if not brilliant, to the collection? There are men now living, Crimean heroes, as they are still called, to whom the name of the Quarries will bring back memories in the nature of nightmares.

There are those who had passed scatheless through the pestilence that had destroyed in the noonday at Varna, had shared in the quick and brilliant triumph on the heights of the Alma, and had borne a noble part in the terrible hand-to-hand struggle of Inkerman. They had suffered in the cold winter rigour over against Sevastopol. Night after night, ill clad and badly fed, they had gaily gone down to the trenches, and yet the Quarries, which had been skilfully turned into rifle pits by the Russians, caused them more annoyance and tribulation than any downright engagement. Winter passed, and the Crimea was enamelled with the beautiful flowers of spring, but the pings of the Russian rifles were still to be heard.

Every heap of stone and rubbish scattered in front of the Redan was utilised for a Russian rifleman, and when the great and unfortunate attack on that fortress was contemplated it was felt absolutely necessary that before any approach could be made

in the direction of the Redan these rifle pits, from which such death had been constantly dealt, must be cleared. And so it was to be, and a party was selected to perform this dangerous and difficult task.

It was a lovely evening in June, and the sun was hardly sinking below the horizon, when the muster of those brave men took place. They set forth on their errand singing with the spirits of schoolboys going to a football match; careless, happy, and mercifully regardless of the deaths that would fall to many of them. But on the battle-field death is robbed of its terrors, and where one violent death in peace time would create a sympathy and sorrow from a whole regiment twenty may fall in a battle and become even objects of envy for having gained a soldier's glorious end.

Among the party selected for the attack was a young man, an officer, who had only been a few years in the service. He had come from England 'with his mother's kiss still warm upon his lips, and the English roses still fresh upon his cheeks.' His spirits were excited and almost boisterous, as if he were delighted at the golden opportunity he saw before him of making a name and reputation among his fellows.

The attack on the pits was not to be made till dark, when the party was to issue from the advanced trenches and try to carry the works before them by a *coup de main*. In the meantime the men lay securely enough under cover of the trenches, and the time was occupied in home stories and regimental jokes and chaff, in which the young officer the subject of my story took a leading and perhaps a somewhat bragging part; but great men have bragged before now. When Wolfe went down to Hayes to dine with Mr. Pitt, after being selected for the command in Canada, it is said that after dinner he waved his sword over his head and braggadocioed, as men should not do until they are taking off their armour instead of putting it on. The men had their supper, and it was 10 o'clock when they crept out of the trenches in the warm summer night. The distance to be traversed was short. The sky was from time to time illumined by the artillery fire from the town, playing on the French lines. The shells, with their trail of comet-like light, and occasional volleys of musketry, distracted from the solemn quiet of the evening. The Russians in the Quarry pits, happily unconscious of the approaching enemy, were unprepared and silent. In

a moment, as our party rushed up, they were made aware of their false security. Many were shot down ; but stolid resistance remained at places, and wherever resistance was greatest and the task most unattainable there was our young officer cheering, inspiring, and engaging in fierce personal combat. Within a bloody half-hour the Russians were driven out, and the long detested Quarries were in our hands.

In those days of constantly recurring deeds of heroic valour there was but one opinion of our young officer's extraordinary pluck and daring, and his name was in every mouth when on the following day the survivors were relieved and marched back into camp. It was to the assaulting party a day of rest, and our young friend's name appeared in general orders as having mainly conducted by his dash and courage in taking the Russian position, and nobody who knew what he had done grudged him the well-earned honour. The following morning he received a message summoning him to the general commanding his division.

Not without some fear and trepidation did he obey the summons, and was ushered into the awful presence of the general, who rose from his chair and shook him warmly by the hand.

'I have to thank you,' he said, 'and publicly to congratulate you on your splendid achievement at the attack on the Quarries, and I have to tell you that your name has been submitted by me, and I am sure with the approval of your colonel, for the honour of the Victoria Cross, an honour, as you know, more coveted than any other in the army.'

The young man was silent for a time, then pulling himself together he said—

'Sir, I deeply thank you for your kind words and the great honour you have done me. Your great kindness emboldens me to ask whether I may speak to you not as a subaltern to a general, but as a man to a man,' and then in a broken voice he presented him not to make the recommendation.

The general was astonished.

'Never,' said the young subaltern, 'can I accept an honour the greatest in the power of a soldier to attain to, and if I am publicly recommended and publicly refuse to accept it I shall be publicly shamed for ever. I must tell you my reason, and make a confession as shameful as it is painful for me to make. On the

night of the attack I was drunk. We had all been carried away more or less with excitement, and I foolishly took a bottle of brandy with me into the trenches, and if I was brave, if I distinguished myself, I did not know it. I cannot accept an honour I do not deserve. I implore you to withdraw your recommendation, and let it be as if it had not been, and so save me from open shame.'

The general's eyes filled with tears, of which he had no cause to be ashamed, for a man, we are told, is never so manly as when he is unmanned.

'I congratulated you when you came in on your physical courage. I now congratulate you on a rarer quality, your moral courage—in which I feel sure you will never fail again. Your secret shall be safe. Good-bye!'

Six years from the time of which I am speaking I had some spare time, and was trying to occupy myself by taking some part in good works in becoming a guardian of the poor in Westminster. We guardians took upon ourselves in turns to visit the workhouse daily during a week.

One evening I had been my round, and asked the master if there were any new inmates that day. Only one, he said, and he had been in the lowest state of filth that he had ever seen a human being in, and was then in the bath room. I went away, feeling I would rather see that man in the second stage of his existence than in the first. In the morning I was surprised to find the new inmate a man of about thirty years of age, evidently a gentleman, a man of good education and address. I could hardly believe he was the man of whom the master had spoken on the previous evening. We entered into conversation, and he told me that he had been in the army, giving me the name of his regiment, that he had got into some trouble, evidently drink, and had retired on a pension, and now in spite of it he was a pauper. Gradually he confided to me that he was an absolute victim to drink, and that on the day he got his small pension he always then and there had a bout of drinking, which left him in an unconscious state of utter recklessness and disregard of dirt and filth, such as he was in when he took refuge in the workhouse last night.

He added that when sober he loathed his life, but drink without restraint made him mad.

I went away to a military club of which I was a member, and

was not long in discovering a friend who had been in the — Regiment. He at once gathered from my description that this man had been an old brother officer of his. As a youngster he had distinguished himself in the Crimea, and they thought at the time he was rather ill-treated in not having some special honour for a very special act of gallantry before the Redan. After that he had gone to India, and had made himself rather notorious—indeed, ridiculous—by his dandyism, always with the last new scent from England. On one occasion he offered to fight a duel with a brother officer who had come into the mess billiard room not properly got up in evening dress; and this was the man evidently who was in so filthy a state that he was not a fitting companion for paupers in a workhouse.

My friend said, though he did not know it of his own knowledge, he had heard rumours that he had furious bouts of drink, and had been forced to retire. We arranged that on the following day we should pay him a visit, and the two old comrades met, one a successful officer in staff employment, the other the abject pauper. My friend instantly recognised his old comrade, and heard from him how he had become worse and worse, and was now almost a confirmed dipsomaniac. He made no secret of the past; he did not know how and whence he had inherited the curse, but confessed it was overwhelming and took him into the lowest haunts of vice and immorality.

My friend left, promising to return and see him, which he did, with the offer that he should be taken into a home for inebriates. He gladly promised to avail himself of it, thinking that it might save him. Everything was settled down to the day, the place, and the hour. On the appointed day my friend called on him in a cab to take him to the station. 'He had left,' said the master, 'the night before.' We did all we could to trace him, but in vain. Poor fellow, let us hope that the sufferings of his inheritance may be taken into consideration when the day of account comes.

LUCY.

'LUCY DEANE? Yes, M'm, she's gone, there's new people there.

'Lucy, she did have a time with the old lady. You remember the old lady—her granny? There she lay all summer with no use of her limbs and her mind gone mostly, and she did call to Lucy cruel. She hadn't the sense, you see, M'm, to know that Lucy had to lay her work out of her hands to go to her, driven as she was and put to it to get done. For the work always comes together, and either we've too much or none at all. I did wonder, I did, how Lucy kept her temper. I'd have said, "Granny, you just hold your tongue and lie still till I've time to attend to you," but Lucy was never that way. And what did the old lady want when she did go to her, leaving the work so she had to sit up half the night to make up for lost time? Only some stuff and nonsense, and as often as not to bid her remember how she had given her word to take her home to be buried. "You remember, Lucy," she'd say, "as how you promised that I should lie beside grandfather. Father gave me his word for it when I came to London, and you said the same." By father she meant Lucy's father, M'm, and with him it was the old lady came to live when the old man, him that was Lucy's grandfather, died. And a deal of trouble I always heard 'twas to get her to come. For she was country born and bred, and hankered after the green fields, as some do that are used to them. For me I never could see much to take to in the country, and at one place where I was, down Hertfordshire way, last June twelvemonth, 'twas lonesome as lonesome, and the bats were just awful bad.

'Lucy looked dead beat, that she did, M'm, and no mistake sometimes, and 'twas worrying, as none can deny, when she might be cutting or trimming, or, maybe, finishing to take the work home that night, to hear "Lucy, Lucy," on and on till she heeded it; and then to find 'twas nothing but the old thing, "You did say, Lucy, as you'd bury me by grandfather." And some can't abide no interruption or to be called away, even when 'tis not a matter of a night's rest, or food to put into your mouth. But the old lady was past being sensible like, and how she did long for the old place, to be sure. Down home this and down home that 't

had always been with her. She said to me many a summer day before she was took ill and kept her bed, "Mrs. Simpson, 'tis all now looking beautiful, I'm thinking, down home. The leaves will all be out, and the birds singing, and the flowers quite a picture." She *was* one for a flower.

'I used to say to Lucy she ought by rights to let the old lady go away (to the infirmary, that is), for what with working for the two of them and her ill all that while, 'twas more than one pair of hands could do. And Lucy, 'twas like a ghost that she looked, and her eyes that red and her nerves all nohow; she'd tremble like a leaf if the door slammed or folk spoke rough. "You'll be struck down with a stroke, Lucy," I'd say, "if you work for two, and your sight will go from you, that it will; you may take my word for it, for your eyes look just like my poor sister Hannah's that went stone blind." So they did, but she would pay no heed. And then there was the trouble to get her money when she'd done the work. Ladies don't think, and some would keep her waiting for her money when she'd earned it who wouldn't wait themselves when a dress was wanted. "I must have it," they'd say, "it's very particular; if you can't undertake it right off, some one else must," and then, when 'twas sent home, they would, likely as not, forget all about it or mislay the bill, maybe they'd tell her, and some would never pay, if you would believe it, which I do call shameful. But ladies don't think. What they want they want, and then it's done with and clean forgotten.

'Well, 'twas one drive, and Lucy was worn to a thread, for 'twas stifling hot last summer, as you may recall, and what with the work and the old lady that wanted waiting on hand and foot, and the heat and the bad debts, 'twas enough to kill her. And she got no holiday, for she could not spare the time—no, nor the money neither—to take one. Holidays often enough cost a sight more than those that want them most can pay for them, and I did think 'twas a merciful thing when I heard the old lady had passed away—went off in her sleep as quiet as a lamb. And then Mrs. Brownlow, the Bible-reader lady, she gave Lucy a letter for a nice place—a Home of Rest, they called it. And I said, "Lucy, that's just come in the nick of time; your Granny's gone, and a good thing too, all things considered, and now you can take a rest, and if you don't, I promise you you'll soon be in the cemetery where you'll lay her yourself." But Lucy, she never went, M'm, to that nice place (and as I heard, and so did Lucy from one who

was there, 'twas as nice a place as you could see anywhere); she'd that promise to the old lady to hinder her. Her money all said and done wouldn't pay the fare to the Home and to take the old lady back to where she set her heart on lying. And Lucy, who, though she looked so meek, could be stubborn too, as those meek-faced ones can, would have it that she'd given her word and would abide by it if she worked her fingers to the bone. Though I did hear her say that the old lady was sensible for a bit before she died, and she called Lucy and she said, "I'll not hold you to your word to bury me by grandfather, Lucy; I've been thinking of all the expense I've put you to, so long ill and all, and I don't want to cost you no more, for you've grudged nothing." (No more she had, when she had it to give. 'Twas herself Lucy denied.) And then I heard say the old lady cried like a child. She was near her end you see, M'm, then, and it cost her all her strength to say what she did.

'But there was no persuading Lucy. She said "Granny's heart was set on it. 'Twas only with the promise to let her lie there at last that father got her here. I heard him say so many a time. And 'tis a beautiful place, quite country-like, and so quiet you can hear the birds fly."

'So all her money went that way and she got no holiday at all.'

'But where is she?' I asked. I knew my informant too well to think myself likely to get by a short cut at what I wanted to know. But still I repeated, 'Where is Lucy? I hope you weren't right in thinking she was killing herself.'

'She was killing herself sure enough if it had gone on so. But three days after she should have gone to the Home, only that she hadn't the money for the fare, having spent it all on taking the old lady back, there was some one come for her. And very well set up he was, and good clothes and all, and a pleasant face, not unlike my Sydney, as you always did say, M'm, looked as good as he is—and a good son he is, very sure, steady and good and a good workman, M'm, and earns good wages. Well, M'm, he that I say is like Sydney, but older, I dare say something like ten years older, he says, "Does Miss Deane live here?"

'And so it was a real mercy and all for the best, as sometimes things are, that she had not gone away. And he'd come back but the very day before he came here for Lucy—back from Australie or somewhere—and he was her old sweetheart, M'm; but some one came

between them and he married a woman as was nothing much, and took no thought for his comfort or for anything. Those fond of drink, M'm, don't, and she was carried off by a fever. I've heard tell that foreign lands are terrible hot, and I thought to myself 'twas a good job she was taken, for she was a bad wife to a good man,—a real bad one. And he having saved a nice sum came home straight away and married Lucy. And, M'm, they've got a good home and a tidy bit of land and everything comfortable, and he's a deal thought of by the gentry round. And Lucy, she told some one that had seen her as told me that she is as happy as the day is long; and he never has a fault to find with her. It did seem that he thought a lot of Lucy that day he came for her first. And her eyes, for I asked particular, remembering my poor sister Hannah's, aren't red ever so little no longer, and she has a rare colour in her cheeks. I dare say that she do look finely, for Lucy was a pretty girl, as you've said yourself, M'm, till with working for two like, and the bad debts, and tending the old lady, that had not got her wits rightly and kept calling her cruel, she wore herself to a thread.'

ELLA FULLER MAITLAND.

A BOER INTERIOR.

'How are the horses, Jakob?' said I to my driver.

'As well as can be expected, I think, Master,' was the reply.

The fact was that I had been travelling hard for two days, driving almost incessantly and making the stoppages very short.

'It's this cold that takes it out of them, Master. After driving the greater part of the night, we ought to give them a long rest,' resumed the driver.

It was seven o'clock in the morning, and the sun had but just risen. We had been driving nearly all night. We had outspanned in a valley the previous day at two o'clock, when it was fairly warm, except for the biting east wind, and had rested our horses there till sunset. Then we had made four 'schofts' of two hours each, with an hour's rest between, and after that sought some sleep. Not exactly we, though. Jakob, a very good and faithful Basuto boy, was a bad driver at night. It was not that he did not do his utmost, but the poor fellow simply could not keep awake in the dark. I had some snuff with me, which, with his help, I frequently administered to his wide nostrils; yet even this did not keep away what he was pleased to call his 'sickness.' What was there left for me to do but take the reins myself? He noticed that I took them out of his hands, but said nothing, quietly fell back in the cart, and snored. This he did each time as soon as we were well under way, but at the outspan he behaved capitally. One could see that he pitied his horses with all his heart, not so much on account of the hard work as for the cold. He treated them tenderly, took them to any water he could descry in the distance, led them back to the cart, and rubbed them down while they were enjoying a sheaf of oats.

Jakob had had all the sleep to which he was entitled on a journey like the present, and he knew it, and, hoping for an afternoon nap, was contented.

The horses were a little stiff, but my driver thought they would be all right by-and-by. The east wind had lulled, and in its place there had sprung up a full warm blast from the west, which made driving more bearable, but which I dreaded on account of possible

rain to follow. South Africa is no land for rain in winter. It is a country intended to bask in everlasting sunshine. Winter, with its cold and keen blasts of wind, is bad enough, yet, so long as the sun shines, it is bearable. But when, during the months from May to August, the face of the heavens is overcast with low hanging clouds, and there is that sickening dripping which is more a Scotch mist than a genuine rain, when the roads get soaked, and every little watercourse fills up—then man and beast alike experience perfect wretchedness. Neither houses nor stables, farm-yard nor open veldt offer efficient accommodation. The sheep droop their ears and stand huddled together; the cattle do not stir but keep up a continual deep sad lowing; and man, European and native—but native even more than white—is the picture of misery.

We had come to the first outspan, which means that we had driven for two hours. Promptly we halted and unharnessed. The poor horses were hot, rolled about in the grass, sniffed water in the distance and made for it, Jakob, armed with the cart-whip, following them.

It was past ten o'clock now. Anxiously I scanned the sky, and descried unmistakable forebodings of rain within a short time. My heart fairly palpitated. I had not bargained for this. I knew that as soon as it rained we should not only suffer the greatest inconvenience, but our horses would not take us much further. But then my driver had spoken of Du Plessis farm: possibly there would be accommodation there. We ought to reach it about four o'clock in the afternoon.

So I sat down on the disselboom, and calculated.

'Two more schofts,' I said to myself; 'surely we can make that.'

And comforted to a certain extent, I went to take a stroll on the veldt.

When my servant came back with the horses, the coffee was ready for him and me. We sat by the fire on our haunches—an exercise at which the European is stupid and the African farmer proficient, but at which the native beats him as far as duration of the performance goes—and poured out and drank, ate our breakfast, and poured out and drank again.

With a mighty smack of his thick lips and slowly rising to his feet, Jakob exclaimed:

'I am all right again. That has done me good.'

And he passed his hand twice over his body downwards in supreme contentment.

‘Will you tell me what you know about that Mr. Du Plessis you talked about this morning?’ I said, addressing him.

‘I do not know very much about him, Master,’ was the reply, ‘because we spent only one night there at that time, and I was with the Kaffir boys in the stable. But I remember distinctly that my master called him a very funny soul as soon as we had left the place. I was all right there, however; I got plenty to eat, and I saw to my horses too.’

‘Was he an old man?’

‘No, I should say a man about thirty, although I saw a girl there, evidently his daughter, who must have been twelve.’

‘And what do you think about the rain?’ I asked again.

‘Can Master see that grey column over there in front of us, looking as if a dirty sheet was hanging out from the sky? It’s raining there now, and I am afraid we shall catch it,’ was the reply. The prediction was verified.

As the rain came from the west and we were going west, we found it, though not much more than a steady drizzle, of a most unpleasant nature, and exceedingly penetrating; the fact that we were riding into it meant, moreover, that we were entering territory already soaked, a matter of much import for the horses. Accordingly, as we got wetter and more uncomfortable, the rate at which we were travelling got slower. Jakob applied the whip more than before, a good deal more, but the cruel castigation had no effect on the worn-out animals.

‘Are you sure of the road?’ inquired I at last, as the sudden fear of losing our way brought my feeling of misery to a climax.

‘Master need not be afraid,’ answered Jakob assuringly; ‘I have been over the road before, and know every inch of it. Don’t give in, Master,’ he added encouragingly; ‘we are near the farm now.’

Fifteen minutes later I saw that we had rounded a turn in the road. The wind was blowing full in our faces, and the rain with it. My legs were stiff, my hands and arms exceedingly cold. I felt as if I could not stand it much longer. Then it was that Jakob suddenly called out.

‘Master, do you see those trees in the distance? That’s the “dam,” and the house is only a hundred yards or so further on.’

In a couple of minutes we stopped before Mr. Du Plessis dwelling.

'You step down, Master, will you, please?' urged Jakob; 'the "Baas" might take offence if I should knock at the door.'

I got out of the cart, and made for the front door.

Before I reached it, it opened, and a farmer of the ordinary description came forward, his hat drawn far on to his eyes, and the broad brim turned down.

'Good evening to you!' I said in my pleasantest voice.

It was five o'clock, and almost dark.

'Who are you?' was the reply, sharply given.

'Good evening, Mr. Du Plessis,' I insisted.

'I don't know you,' was the gruff retort.

'My name is Dittele; I am the headmaster of the Government school at——'

'You are telling lies,' came the reply.

'Thank you,' I said; 'what do you mean, Mr. Du Plessis?'

'You are a minister of the Dutch Church.'

'I am not,' I insisted. 'I am a schoolmaster, and, as you see, have been overtaken by this rain, and do not know what to do.'

'You will have to drive on,' said the man.

'I cannot,' said I.

'You can't stay here,' rejoined he. 'I don't take just anybody into my house.'

'Do you mean to say, Mr. Du Plessis, that there is no chance of our spending the night here?' I inquired anxiously.

'None whatever. There is a farm an hour further where they may take you in,' was the cruel answer.

Straightening myself up in front of him, and looking him full in the face, I said, realising all I should have to meet if he actually did send me away:

'Oom, now listen to me. I am not a clergyman, as I have told you; I am a schoolmaster. My boy and I are wet, and cold, and miserable. Our horses are tired, and cannot carry us any further. Will you take the responsibility of sending me away, and having me perhaps come to grief in this mist?'

There was a twitch in his eye as I was speaking. He was wavering, and I was gaining ground.

'I will pay for my board and that of the Kaffir,' I added, 'for the horses' food and stabling—pay just what you demand.'

I had conquered. The man was yielding. Never taking my eyes off his, I concluded:

'Afrikanders are renowned for their hospitality. I heard that in my own country, far away.'

'Are you a foreigner? You speak my language.'

'I am a foreigner all the same.'

'Assure me again that you are not an Afrikander minister.'

'I am not, I assure you.'

There was a sudden change in the man's features. They relaxed. His expression softened. Looking over my head, he called out to Jakob:

'I say, boy, you can outspan. Push the cart into the wagon house, and put up there for the night. Your horses must go into the kraal, I am sorry to say; my stable is full.'

'Thank you, Baas,' sounded Jakob's relieved reply. 'I am no stranger here. I was here once before, Baas, and will make myself at home. Is Jan, the bastard, still with you?'

'Yes, you will find him in the stable, cutting forage.'

Turning round, and opening the door which his great body had barricaded while we were having our altercation, Mr. Du Plessis said to me:

'Come in, Meester, come in. We have stood here long enough.'

I followed him into the house, the front door leading into an oblong apartment, twenty feet deep by fourteen wide, which served as reception, sitting, and dining room. It had a window on either side of the front door, and a fanlight above it. Out of this room five doors led into other apartments; one on the right-hand side wall to Mr. Du Plessis' bedroom, and another to that of the grandmother, who shared hers with two grown-up daughters. Opposite the former there was a bedroom for the other daughters, of whom there were seven altogether, and opposite the latter there was a spare room. Straight across, in the back wall, a double glass door gave admittance to the kitchen.

The room in which we were contained a large oblong table, on six legs, filling up the entire centre; solid straight-backed oak chairs with cane bottoms were arranged along the spaces between the many doors. Beneath the windows, which were rather high from the floor, there stood on the right-hand side a little table covered with smoking utensils, and on the left an harmonium, without which (it is called a 'seraphine') no African home is considered complete.

The room was empty when we entered it.

'Shake hands with me now,' said Mr. Du Plessis, touching me on the shoulder; 'I could not do it before. One doesn't know nowadays what rabble one gets into one's house at times. We have to be exceedingly careful.'

'I grant that,' I replied. 'But what great objection have you to taking in a Dutch minister?'

'If you are a schoolmaster in this country,' the farmer answered, 'you must be aware that there are two Dutch churches. I belong to the smaller one, the "Reformed Church." We are a small body compared with the other, and all our ministers I know. But of the other Church, I have made up my mind I shall never take a minister into this house as long as I live. Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.'

So saying, he seated himself at the side table, offering me a chair next him.

'Now, Meester,' he continued, 'tell me a little about yourself. I like to know the people I receive into my house. Are you a married man?'

'Yes, I am.'

'I am glad to hear it. Any family?'

'We have four children.'

'Is that all? I have thirteen living. How old are you?'

'I am thirty-four.'

'Indeed! and I am thirty-six. You must have married late in life.'

'No, rather young, I think. I was twenty-three.'

'Twenty-three, thirty-four, eleven years, four children,' he calculated musingly; 'that's very different from me. Let me tell you about myself,' he went on, more directly addressing me. 'I was married first when I was sixteen, lost my wife at the age of eighteen, and took my second a year later. She is still alive and has had fourteen children, two of whom are dead. You will see her by-and-by.'

'You see,' said I, for the sake of making some remark on the queer tale I had just heard, 'you see, the habits of different nations are different.'

'That's it exactly,' he replied eagerly, as if I had hit on the right thing. 'We are the successors of the patriarchs, God's people, following in the steps of Abraham and Jacob. We rear cattle and rear children, and God blesses us in both. I know that other nations live differently, and I do not admire them for it.'

I began to understand why Jakob's former master had called this man a 'queer soul.'

'What countryman are you?' he continued.

'I am from the borders of Holland and Germany,' I said, 'and as far as language is concerned, belong to either nation. But I am classed as a Hollander.'

'A Hollander, you say?' he exclaimed; 'are you telling the truth?'

'I am,' said I.

'Why, mother will be glad! You know, my mother lives with us, and she is a direct descendant of a Hollander. He was a sea-captain and her grandfather.'

'I shall be glad to speak to the old lady,' I forced myself to reply.

'You will, will you?' he asked, and, rising from his chair, he added, 'I must go and tell her at once.'

I was glad when the man went, glad to have a lull in the stream of words to which I had been listening. His loquaciousness was wearisome. Besides, a moment's reflection was very welcome to me.

Was this, I thought, the secret of these people's quaint lives, of their out-of-the-way habits, of the misunderstanding between them and Europeans? Did they consider themselves the People of God *par excellence*? I had read how the early *Voor-trekkers*, when escaping from what they pleased to call the English yoke, about the years 1835-38, had travelled north towards Canaan, and that when they arrived at a certain tributary of the Limpopo or Crocodile River, they had called it the 'Nile,' believing themselves to be in the proximity of the Holy Land. But I had taken these reports as having originated with a few fanatics, who were elated by long-continued excitement, and not wholly responsible for what they related. Besides, whatever there might have been of that nature in the ancestors, I believed the Afrikander people had sobered down to the ordinary level of common-sense folk. But here was a man who had behaved shabbily towards a stranger from no other motive than an antagonistic feeling towards all those whom he did not, with himself, classify as the 'People of God.' The thought was novel to me. I resolved that I should talk to him again.

'Master!' I heard Jakob calling on the stoep in a subdued tone of voice.

'What is it?' I inquired.

'Master, do you know what the old fellow has just done? He has loosed his own cart-horses from the stall, and driven them out in the kraal for the night, and has put ours in their places. A good thing too; I thought the animals wouldn't live till morning. It's frightful out. He is in the kitchen now, talking. Good night, Master. I've made myself a cosy corner in the wagon-house, and have had a nice hot supper in the kitchen. Good night.'

'Good night,' I replied.

He had scarcely gone when my host came back, followed by a young woman.

'This is my eldest daughter, Meester,' he said by way of introduction, 'as yet unmarried, but she won't have long to wait; her intended is finishing his house.'

The girl shook hands, and seated herself on one of the chairs along the wall, opposite ours. She had said nothing, nor did she intend to say anything. She sat there like a statue, her eyes fixed on me.

'Where is your pipe?' said the farmer.

'I have none,' I replied; 'I do not smoke.'

'Not smoke, and a Hollander? You are unlike any of your nation whom I have met.'

'It does not agree with me,' I replied, excusing myself.

'It does with me, I am glad to say,' was his answer; and filling his pipe, and holding a lighted match to it, he puffed away, all the time looking at me over his left arm, and drawing forth clouds of that smoke which helps to make African homes what they are.

Presently he moved his chair up to mine, and, lowering his face with one side turned up, peered curiously into my spectacles.

'Why do you wear those things?' he interrogated.

'To see better,' I said curtly.

'You are not old.'

'No, I am not; but my sight isn't good.'

'I don't think that ought to be. People ought not to wear out before their time,' he said insolently.

I began to feel exceedingly uncomfortable.

'I wanted to ask you,' I said, by way of changing the subject, 'I wanted to ask you about this name, "People of God." Whom does it mean?'

'Not you,' he said, with aggravating promptitude, 'but me and my people.'

'You will have to give me a better answer than that,' I protested. 'Whom do you consider to belong to your people?'

'My Church,' he expostulated, with a vehemence that showed me he was being worked up.

'Your Church,' I said, 'to the exclusion of all others?'

'Precisely so. God in heaven is our Father and divine Law-giver, and Paul Kruger our leader on earth. He rules us in God's name. If you have lived in this country for some time, you cannot have failed to notice how manifest this is. God led our fathers out of Egypt where we were in bondage to cruel men who sucked the very lifeblood out of us. We went forth—went forth into the wilds of Africa, established our freedom, and—but for a brief interval when iniquity obtained the upper hand over us—have maintained it to this day.'

'That is not only your Church,' I interposed, by way of guiding him in his statements.

'It's my Church people that form the nucleus of the nation,' he said almost solemnly. 'It's on account of that people that the blessing of the Almighty is resting on all. Our enemies are many, but as their designs have been frustrated in the past, so they will be in the future. The watchful care of Heaven is over us.'

'Do you, as a people, consciously assume the responsibilities of the "People of God"?' I ventured to ask.

With a stupid side glance at me over his pipe, he said, 'What do you mean by those words?'

'I mean,' I said, 'whether you live and act as befits a chosen nation. To be sure, a fearful responsibility must attach to the position you claim so confidently.'

He shook his head. Evidently the poor fellow did not follow me.

'Our parents, some of whom are yet amongst us,' he said, 'have taught us that we are the People of God, and we, their children, having acknowledged the unmistakable signs by which the fact is borne out, have learned to share the opinion of our elders.'

'Does the thought make you happy?' I asked.

'It renders us peculiar,' was his bold reply. 'Yes, it does, and makes a dividing line between us and others in the land—'

they are many, and their numbers are daily increasing—who do not belong to us.’

‘They bring you new and strange ideas,’ I suggested.

‘Our ministers,’ he said, ‘have a very simple and yet forcible way of explaining the nature of the difference between us and those who are not of us. There is, they say, a kingdom of light and a kingdom of darkness. In the one God rules, in the other, Satan. God’s people have light and walk in the light; those that are not of them have their minds darkened by sin.’

‘Do you,’ I said, ‘mean to infer that your Church is the only source of light in this country?’

‘Keep cool,’ he exclaimed, waving his large hand before my face; ‘this is a painful subject we are handling. Truth stings, I know. There is no doubt in my mind that my Church is the only light-bearer between the Vaal and the Crocodile.’

‘Suppose the strangers, whom this country harbours, should join your Church, would they be incorporated into the People of God?’ I ventured to ask.

‘That is an unheard-of thing,’ he replied. ‘The gulf is so wide. I have never known such a thing to occur.’

‘But why should the gulf exist at all?’ said I, pursuing the inquiry. ‘Men are all alike before God, are they not? Is there no possibility of the different elements fusing into one great nation?’

‘There may be politically,’ he replied with great readiness. ‘Men may live side by side and behave as members of one community; but what can you expect of a union which must for ever remain a superficial one?’

‘But why so, Mr. Du Plessis?’ I said pressingly. ‘That is exactly the point I do not understand.’

‘The understanding is not mine to give,’ said he with positive solemnity. ‘The secret of God’s choice none shall reveal.’

My astonishment, which had been steadily increasing, had now reached its climax. I thought it absurd to continue the conversation. Here was an individual, coarse, uncouth, repulsive, a type one would never associate with anything lofty or idealistic, living in surroundings which, barring the abundance of free air and heaven’s sunshine, were little short of degrading, and yet imbued with the idea, as firmly rooted as revoltingly arrogant, that he and his kind were the ‘elect of God’ and the objects of Heaven’s tenderest care. And from all I could learn, the

ministers were responsible for this mad delusion. How could this fellow himself be made answerable for his notions of things and conditions? There was no reason why he should have any ideas of his own.

The opening of the kitchen door brought the relief for which I was hoping. As I turned in the direction of the welcome sign of a change, an aged female was slowly approaching me. She was dressed in a plain dark grey gown, buttoned down the front, her neck wrapped in a small handkerchief of lighter shade, folded in a point; her skirt was entirely covered by a black apron of considerable size. Her dark hair was only slightly streaked with grey. Her figure was unusually slim, her shoulders were a little bent, and her chest was somewhat narrow.

'This is my mother,' said Mr. Du Plessis.

I rose, advanced a step, and shook the outstretched hand. 'How do you do, Mrs. Du Plessis?' I said; 'glad to meet you.'

'She isn't Mrs. Du Plessis,' corrected my host in a gruff voice; 'Mrs. Du Toit is her name now.'

'I beg your pardon,' said I, trying to correct myself, 'I did not know, Mrs. Du Toit.'

'You see, Meester,' she said, 'it is what so often happens. I have survived my third husband. This,' pointing to the man in the corner, 'was Mr. Du Plessis' eldest son; but Mr. Du Plessis died, and I became Mrs. Du Preez; and when Mr. Du Preez died, I was married to Stephen Du Toit, my neighbour, who was a widower.'

'That means, of course, three sets of children,' chimed in Du Plessis, with an amount of delight in the expression which I failed to appreciate.

'Really four,' corrected the old woman; 'fourteen of my own, and seven by Mr. Du Toit's first marriage.'

'You see, Meester,' said Du Plessis, 'we do rival the patriarchs, don't we?'

After this delightful introduction to the oldest member of the family, the conversation fortunately took a different turn. The old woman had come to unbosom herself. She was of Holland extraction, and more, she had seen with her own eyes ancestors who had come from Holland. She knew the place where they had lived in the northern country, knew of the existence of cousins, nephews, and nieces across the sea, had a dim recollection of stories her grandfather had told her, and

dwelt with evident delight on the fact that she had reason to believe that she was a descendant of a very numerous family.

It was getting late, and I was tired. Besides, I had not touched any food for many hours. Fortunately Du Plessis became weary of the animated conversation in which he could take little part, and bluntly said :

‘Have you had any supper?’

I did not say, ‘How could I? You have kept me here tied to my chair ever since I came in, breathing tobacco smoke and foul air.’ I did not say this, but my heart rebelled against the obvious necessity of spending any more time in this man’s house.

‘I am rather hungry,’ I replied.

‘Mother,’ said he, ‘get Meester some food.’

The lordly command was forthwith obeyed. The girl on the chair never stirred. The old woman rose from her seat and trotted awkwardly away. That girl on the chair had not once opened her lips. I was getting weary of the lasting presence of that statue-like creature, and, turning to her, said :

‘Miss Du Plessis, you play the harmonium, I suppose?’

‘No, she doesn’t,’ put in the father most gruffly.

‘Has she been to school?’ I inquired, turning to him.

‘Rather,’ was the reply; ‘why, she is a member of the Church.’

‘That means that her education is complete?’ I suggested.

‘Yes; she was confirmed a month ago, and is now ready to be married.’

There was an awkward silence of a minute or two. I thought of home, and wished myself there. Suddenly my neighbour was heard to ejaculate :

‘Meester, one thing I must say : with those glasses, and that long hair of yours, you are the ugliest Hollander I ever set eyes on, I do declare.’

I smiled, but did not stir. By this time I had learned to expect little surprises from that man.

But the girl stirred, and, fixing her eyes full on her father, protested almost with animation :

‘And I say, Pa, he is the prettiest man I ever saw.’

The situation had become truly ludicrous. There was I, with not a sensible soul to turn to, between two people equally ignorant, equally queer, possibly worse than queer, which in the father’s case I was beginning to suspect.

Once more help came at the right moment. The old lady came in from the kitchen with a tray in her hand.

The contents were unmistakably tempting to a hungry man. There was a chop, just fried, a couple of slices of bread, some butter, and a cup of coffee.

Very soon afterwards it was suggested that we should retire for the night. I saw the old lady and the granddaughter through one door. I had been told that Mr. and Mrs. Du Plessis were wont to take up their quarters in the front room to the right, and I guessed that the door nearest the kitchen led to the apartment where I should spend the night.

Into that apartment I was ushered when my host had lighted a tallow candle. He opened the door, let me pass in, handed me the light, and withdrew.

The room was six feet wide by nine long. The door stood in the short side of it. There was no window, but in the nine-foot wall to the right there was a fanlight which conducted light into it from the kitchen. It was never opened, although I observed that it had hinges, air being admitted from the dining-room through the door.

To say that I could not believe my eyes when the flickering candle filled the room space with its lurid light sufficiently to descry what was there, would be using the mildest expression possible. To venture the statement that I was thoroughly taken back would certainly be true. The door had closed, and I stood with my back towards it. Straight in front of me there was nine square feet of clear floor space, beyond which a wooden stretcher with bedding reached from wall to wall. In front of this in the space between me and the door were ranged along the right-hand side wall three sacks of flour, one of Kaffir corn, and one of mealies, three of them open and apparently being used. On the left, arranged in the same way, there was first a chair, then a box of carpenter's tools, then a huge pile of bars of Boer soap, and then a side of bacon standing up against the wall. Above my head a shelf ran along the wall on either side full of boxes, supporting reeds which stretched from wall to wall, from which were suspended scores of bundles of newly made tallow candles.

In this apartment I was to spend the night.

I jumped up, undressed hurriedly as far as I considered it safe, blew out the candle, opened the door as far as the sacks allowed, and cautiously laid myself on the bed, using my great-

coat as a cover. The smell of the bacon, the smell of the soap, the smell of the candles, the smell of the stale tobacco fumes which filled the dining-room, all tended to oppress me and take my breath away. I saw that sleeping in a horizontal position was out of the question, so I sat up, and, resting my head on my hands, dozed off for very weariness. At eleven, however, I was on my feet. My hands were terribly swollen and itched to a maddening degree. I lit my candle and searched for water, but there was none.

I spent a wretched, but a busy night, and felt the utmost relief when I heard the clock strike the hour of 5 A.M. I left my room, went through the dining-room on tiptoe, unbolted the front door, and went out. Happily the rain had stopped, the stars were merrily twinkling, and the last quarter of a waning moon was standing high overhead. By its light I found the cart-house, where Jakob had put up. I woke him, bade him look after the horses, and betook myself to the dam, a large reservoir where the rainwater was stored for irrigation purposes. Here, despite the chilling cold, I partly undressed and cooled my itching skin and aching temples, thoroughly enjoying the wash. I took deep draughts of the delightfully fresh air, and soon began to feel myself again. Going back to the house, I finished my toilet, and then went for a stroll.

It was nearly eight o'clock when I returned. The family were only just ready to begin the day. Mr. Du Plessis sat at the side table in the dining-room. And there was Mrs. Du Plessis, whom I had not seen before, and the children were there, girls and boys, down to a baby under twelve months. These had all ranged themselves on the chairs along the walls, and all sat mute.

Presently the old lady came in from the kitchen, carrying a basin of water, a towel, and a piece of soap. These she placed on the table at the top end by the front door, and then, seating herself, laconically said, 'Now, Meester, wash yourself.'

I had but just recovered from the effects of that terrible night, the wearisome hours of which had failed to erase from my memory the painful moments of the evening before. Was I now to be subjected to further torture?

'Thank you,' I said, 'I have washed.'

'You lie,' she said, as if it were the most natural expression to use; 'you had no water in your room.'

'There was no water in my room,' I replied, 'but I went to the dam at five o'clock this morning, and had a delightful wash.'

'But how is it your eyes are so swollen if you have been up so long?' she asked.

'The room did that for me,' I answered calmly. 'My lids are still swollen and very painful.'

'Oh, ho!' laughed Mr. Du Plessis, 'he got bitten! Fancy a man getting bitten! Those things don't trouble us in the least, you see.'

'I am not accustomed to them,' I retorted. 'In my house we never see such a thing.'

'Shall we read now?' asked the mother. 'I think Meester ought to read this morning.'

'And pray,' added the eldest daughter.

A good-sized family Bible was handed me, and on placing it on the table and opening it at random, what should crawl out but a specimen of my nightly visitors! I recoiled from the holy book, but one of the boys, noticing my embarrassment, calmly removed the insect, and either gave it its liberty or kept it in his hand till after prayers.

Prayers over, I had breakfast alone, the family repairing to the kitchen for their meal. The sun had meanwhile broken through the morning clouds, and was doing his best to make good to the earth his absence on the previous day.

Mr. Du Plessis joined me after a little while, and seating himself next to me, and drawing great clouds from his pipe, enlarged on his act of generosity with regard to my horses, of which Jakob had apprised me in the evening. I was truly thankful to him and told him so, and my words seemed to satisfy him.

When I asked him for my bill, he was generous again. He had lodged and fed my horses, my driver, and myself, and would only allow me to pay what he was actually out of pocket for forage consumed.

Then he took me over the cultivated portions of his farm, showed me his sheep and goats in their pens, gave me minute directions regarding the road to Pretoria, and finally sent me off amid loud protestations of friendship and hopes of seeing me again.

I went on my way rejoicing, and never spent another night on that farm.

FREIHERR VON ELFT.

SIGNS AND SEASONS.

BY THE REV. JOHN M. BACON.

A *GLOBE* of thistledown, which has been shifting round the flower-beds uneasily, as though ashamed of being found in a well-ordered garden, has suddenly changed its mood and started away upwards towards the clouds, so determinedly that one might almost credit it with having some honest business on hand. It is followed, too, almost immediately by a companion that has evidently been lurking in the road outside, after the manner of wayside loafers. Their habit is to wander until they find good resting-ground, no matter how far away; but in my opinion the pair of them will get themselves into trouble this time; for if they reach the strong cross current which the clouds show me to be travelling not far overhead and very rapidly, they are likely, judging from personal experience of aerial travelling, to find themselves out at sea before nightfall.

To trace the ultimate destination of many of these wind-sown seeds would be a most interesting inquiry. I have on several occasions observed them passing a balloon riding at two or three thousand feet altitude, and still mounting upwards, while at the same time I have had proof that light bodies, even when steadily falling, may sometimes occupy an incredible time in reaching the earth. In an extraordinary journey undertaken to view the Leonid showers my companions and myself were drifting helplessly for many hours up above a dense cloud-screen which hid the earth, and, being in much peril of wandering out to sea, we dropped a large number of folded notes, praying the finders to telegraph to the coast to bespeak any available succour. Our course that day has since been determined and the fact proved that these express messages must have been thrown down somewhere over Bath or even east of Bath. Yet it is now clear that the majority must have dropped in the Bristol Channel, while one was picked up far away on a mountain in Glamorganshire. This would show that the papers—folded in compact three-cornered notes—occupied from one to two and a half hours (judging from the behaviour of the balloon) to fall from the point of their despatch, which, in

altitude, was never beyond 9,000 feet. Regarding then the travel of the feathery form of wind-seeds whose nature is to float rather than fall, and granting the theory insisted on by meteorologists, that a strong and general high current is always flowing aloft in the same direction as the earth's rotation, it is very conceivable that a lusty thistle flourishing somewhere away in the American prairies may by good luck, yet simply by the agency that its nature employs, sow one of its seeds in a British ploughed field. The method of the impulsive air currents so often made evident to us will repay examination. The upward draught that carries the seeds skyward has doubtless a double cause. The air will be lying warm over some sheltered patch of ground, and on the other hand the higher current may be setting from a cold quarter; in which case there are present just the conditions that exist in a tall chimney shaft, and thus an eddy presently forms and breaks away, sloping up the sky.

A little thought will show that in late autumn we may expect to find the lower air in a critical state of unstable equilibrium, as far as British soil is concerned. It is one necessary consequence of our insular position. The land, together with the air lying over it, especially at night, begins at this season to cool considerably, but not so our ocean waters. The frequenters of our seaside places do not duly appreciate this, for, after September has well advanced, the bathing machines begin to be drawn off the beach, and the 'morning dip' is left only for the hardier among the visitors. Yet any one who will put out in a boat beyond low water mark and well in deep water, will, even at this late date, be rewarded by a plunge in sea as warm as it was weeks ago.

Conceive the consequence. England is but a little plot of ground; its average width not more than 200 miles, and the air is now lying chill over its surface, but many degrees warmer over ocean tracts around its margin.

This state of things while it lasts must be highly conducive to atmospheric disturbance and to the creation of transient air currents of much complexity. But there is deeper significance in the lordly march past of the grand high-flying clouds that are heading away eastward, or there is no truth in weather lore. One of the oldest and best trusted rules relating to wind and weather is that if, in our latitudes at least, you stand with your back to the wind, then the low glass, or the bad weather, is on

your left hand. Now, the present wind on the ground is from the south, and thus the upper current going east is clearly blowing up from the foul quarter. Were the chances of weather admitted into betting circles, a speedy change at this period would probably be called a 'dead cert.' Rain is coming up behind the flying scuds, though it may yet be a hundred miles away.

But weather lore belongs to a science that is many-sided, and there are local signs and sayings, of another order truly, but which for mere old association's sake we should be sorry to dismiss. So that if the 'sun has been drawing water,' or even a German band has been round the village, we like to hear the countryfolk point to these as foreboding rain. Anyway, this afternoon other tokens have not been wanting; the swallows are flying low and gnats are troublesome, moreover the cat has been washing her face, and what need we more?

That there is reason in much of this weather wisdom there is no disputing, and the most obvious cause of many of the popular signs of coming wet is to be found in a growing moisture in the air. Estimates show that the average amount of watery vapour in the air, take England over, is only about $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., but, according to circumstances, this may be enormously increased, and the quantity of water that may be sucked up by the great atmospheric sponge and squeezed out over certain regions may be best grasped by a little very simple arithmetic.

The average rainfall in London is about twenty-four inches; it is less on the east coast, but grows ever greater as we go west, till it reaches seventy or eighty inches on our extreme west coast. Then picture these measurements in this way. Let the area of the British Isles be made into one gigantic swimming bath, after the fashion of those to which we are accustomed; let the east side be that reserved for young children, beginning with the suitable depth of scarcely two feet, and let the depth increase constantly up to six feet or more on the west coasts of Ireland and Scotland. Then the water required to fill the huge bath would be fairly well supplied from the clouds in a single year.

Calculations have been made of the whole amount of the aerial watery ocean at any time present over the globe, the result running into a row of figures which convey no idea to the mind; but the sum will work out another way. The whole of the water supply of London gathered together from the first establishment of the New River Company in the time of James I. to the present

hour would fall short of the entire amount of water the atmosphere holds at any moment; which quantity, be it noted, it holds almost entirely at its lowest levels.

The true force of these facts lies in this direction, that in the face of the sky itself must be sought our best weather guide. Clouds, or their absence, are the best commentary on the weather-glass; so also sunrise and sunset can generally tell much, and what they tell may be relied on.

Only yesterday by this hour the clouds had fluttered abroad to the four quarters of the heaven, tokens that all might read. It was a mackerel sky, and there are two species of mackerel sky, each with its distinct message. One form may be fairly compared to a vast flock of sheep lying down, and occupying one of the highest levels of the sky. The aeronaut never reaches these, and only the lofty mare's-tails scar above them. They are no heralds of bad weather. But another species of mackerel sky there is, which partakes of a different and lower formation; its fleeces are less white and delicate, and *en masse* suggest a shoal of fishes, and when this becomes on the increase then prepare for rain.

Those, however, who are anxious about the weather of the morrow cannot consult a better oracle than that of the sunset overnight, and if a second opinion be wanted, then by all means call in the tokens of the next morning's dawn. A consideration of perspective claims attention here, inasmuch as clouds, if only sparsely but uniformly scattered over the sky, must of necessity appear piled together near the horizon. The effect is much the same as when from the top of a 'bus halfway along the Strand the traffic is viewed east and west. In the distance both ways, the roadway and pavements, appear densely blocked, while the crowd may in reality be nowhere greater than where the observer is travelling with but little hindrance. Thus it follows that a 'high dawn,' an accepted sign of ill, implies that lower levels are everywhere thick with masses of vapour, while a 'low dawn' is welcome proof to the contrary. Further, it needs no saying that it is when the sun is on the horizon that the low levels are shown up most clearly, and thus, in common life, our opportunities of observing these occur most frequently at sunset.

There is something about sundown that compels the most careless observer to stop and look round. It is the hour when, as it were, in the great aerial workshop, the hands 'change over,'

and the night shift takes the place of that of the day. There is a short lull before the machinery is in full swing again. The wind drops; the breath of heaven changes, and in a few minutes the sun, already 'off' for the night, as one last duty, hangs aloft his signal lights. Such, at least, is the common order of things.

If now the western sky lights up rosy red, we have learned to regard this as the surest pledge of a fair to-morrow; while, on the other hand, an angry Indian red is to be wholly distrusted. Yellows, again, are unwholesome colourings, and a distinct orange light is a universally recognised storm signal. The weather saw, 'If you see a rainbow make for shelter as quickly as you can,' has the popular exception of the rainbow at night, and that exception is generally justified in this fashion. The west and south-west being regarded, and with too much reason, as our stormy quarter, a late rainbow simply proves that a cloud screen lies to the east, while the sun has broken out in the west, or, in other words, the sky, in a normal way, is clearing off. By parity of reasoning the rainbow in the morning must imply that clouds are gathering and coming up.

The knowledge which aerial exploration is acquiring adds very materially to our power of forecasting weather seasons, and moreover opens up important possibilities. There is always a fascination, if not a practicability, in the thought that by mechanical measures we may presently find a way of gathering supplies of water from the skies during seasons of general and serious drought like that of the late summer. Endeavours are more likely to be made when better knowledge has been acquired of such available stores as may lie to hand during such a protracted season. The long succession of unvaried cloudless skies, filled only, so far as the dweller below can tell, with air like the breath of an oven, is apt to drive one to the too hasty conclusion that the heavens are drained dry.

But there is much false logic in this. To begin with—paradox as it may appear—the sun has very little effect directly on the air itself. Its rays pass through the greater mass of air without heating it any more than they heat a window-pane, which may remain cool under a blazing sun though the woodwork grow hotter than the hand can comfortably bear. The air only grows warm by contact with the baked earth, which causes it to ascend and so to carry warm dry air into higher levels. But this is only carried on to a limited extent. There are the

moist streams flowing somewhere overhead, though only made obvious when a summer cloud comes drifting past, rapidly wasting into the thirsty atmosphere that lies around. Such streams are doubtless flowing all the while unnoticed, just as the old bourns of London still flow the same as ever, only now under the streets among the sewers.

The balloonist encounters these aerial rivers, and when armed with suitable instruments can locate them with some precision. He has already proved that different weather conditions lurk in different regions well within the reach of his own aerial craft, and from his point of view it would seem by no means beyond the bounds of possibility that man may presently divert at his pleasure and for his use the moisture-laden streams that commonly flow in close proximity to his dwelling.

But the agent in these times that is universally looked to as capable of fulfilling our ardent ambitions, if not our wildest hopes, is of course electricity, in some form already known or yet to be discovered, and already we have been in wireless electrical communication with the clouds. It needs now but a small exercise of our imagination to picture how—say by high-flying kites or other aerostatic apparatus—an electric connection could possibly be established at pleasure at any point between earth and heaven that might gather a local thunderstorm, and bring a full inch of rain on to a thirsty hillside or over burnt-up pastures. If such a scheme were practicable, we can perhaps picture parish councils with new subjects for debate. The squire will put in a claim for unbroken weather for the flower show in his park, while his chief tenant will stipulate for plumping showers on his hundred-acre field of mangold-wurzel.

THE GREY WOLF.

‘EUSTACE, darling, is it still snowing?’

The man walked quickly to the window and peered out into the night; then he resumed his place at the bedside.

‘Yes, Stella, it is still snowing. But don’t talk now; don’t excite yourself, dearest; just rest quietly.’

‘Snowing! always snowing! In the morning, Eustace, there will be a great big drift all round us. Nobody can get to us now out here on the hills through all that snow.’

‘Rest, Stella, rest. You know what the doctor told us both. You promised——’

‘Oh, the doctor, the man with the kind brogue; do you know, darling, I just looked at him and laughed. It was all so impossible, so *silly*, what he said; he knew it himself.’

‘Stella, do you wish to break my heart?’

‘No, darling; but I do want to talk to you ever so quietly now that we are quite alone and safe—perfectly safe.’

The man gazed into the pale beautiful face without speaking. The light of fever shone in the deep blue eyes; the raven hair strayed untrammelled over the temples. A light shawl hung loosely over her shoulders, exposing the throat, cold and white.

‘It is so funny, Eustace, to find ourselves literally alone—without even a servant. Why do they call this house haunted, Eustace? The old woman who comes in the daytime would walk miles through the snow sooner than stop one night with you and me.’

‘The Irish are superstitious; what does it matter?’

‘No, it doesn’t matter a bit. I longed for this—to get up into the hills with just you, and then——’

‘Don’t!’ said the imploring voice of the other as he leaned over her. The frail form shivered for an instant, and then the man’s arms wound round her.

‘Eustace,’ she said in an awed whisper, ‘do you remember how *he* tracked us everywhere except here? How did he find us out in Paris, in Berlin, in Vienna, in Rome? As sure as we escaped in the daytime he followed us in the night—galloping, galloping swiftly, silently through the night—the Grey Wolf!’

Galloping, galloping,' she repeated, stretching out her hands, almost transparent, and waving them in imitation of the swift subtle motion she described.

'Hush, Stella! he will never cross your path again.'

'But I see him, the cruel Grey Wolf! He comes always straight on, never swerving, never faltering, to claim his own! Nobody but the Grey Wolf runs through the snow and the night.'

The man ground his teeth as he listened.

'He has no claim to you, Stella; you belong to no one in the world but me.' In his despair he crushed his lips against the bare white throat.

'Eustace, you know we can never fly away any more. This is the last hiding-place, Eustace; two weeks already of rest: the fear of him is passing away.'

'The fear of him?'

'Yes, Eustace, it is *that*; the poor doctor couldn't understand the Grey Wolf.'

The wind swept past the fir trees, on through the rafters with an ominous moan, rising and falling, bearing with it from the sea beyond sinister messages for those who wait and fear. The woman had sunk back on the pillows, silent and exhausted. The man pulled the curtains nervously, as though wishing once and for ever to shut out the impenetrable something which lurked in the darkness outside. He lowered the lamp and threw a log on the fire, and the flames hissed as they licked up the snow.

'Eustace, put your arms round me again. I am better now, better than I have been all the year you and I have been together.'

'Don't talk about it now, Stella; it only wearies you. You need strength, dearest, only strength.'

'Only strength!' An indomitable irony played for a moment on the lips still quivering with the yearning to speak out the pain that no irony could subdue.

'He wasn't always the Grey Wolf, Eustace; a little stern and cold perhaps, but never cruel. His eyes usedn't to *burn*; he wasn't a bit like that: we made him a wolf, Eustace, you and I together! My beautiful blonde Eustace, how was it possible? It seems all like a wicked, unnatural fairy tale.'

'Yes, darling, a fairy tale! an impossible evil story that is haunting your poor little head to-night! It will be gone by morning.'

'But, Eustace, he *did* track us. Didn't he leave a card at our hotel in Paris just to let us know that he was there? Didn't we see him at the theatre in Vienna, in the galleries at Rome—haunting us always, waiting for a quiet place to spring? Do wolves *spring*, Eustace?'

'Listen, Stella! He has given up this mad pursuit, and if——'

'Yes, if?'

'If he continues to be what you have named him, the Grey Wolf, well, he shall share the wolf's fate. Believe me, Stella, I swear it.'

'No, Eustace, not that, not that. The poor Grey Wolf is so lonely. It is we who are wrong. We have been wicked, Eustace, wicked.'

'Poor tired child! Wicked! wicked! In the infinity of space could not your little life burn peacefully to its end?'

The man's voice was choked; the terrible 'Ανάγκη was claiming him also.

'Yes, I thought there was room; but, Eustace, something narrows us down. What is it, darling?'

There were tears in his eyes as he answered her.

'I cannot lie to you, Stella. It is the eternal law that binds the future to the past.'

'Then it was all a mistake, this new beautiful love we promised each other a year ago?'

'It was a crime.'

The words fell as though dragged from his lips. The spell of the night and the nameless suggestion of death which lay like iron on his heart made the tenderness of denial an impossible infamy.

'But it was so beautiful,' the woman murmured; and then the man rallied.

'Yes, darling, it was beautiful—and in that lies its redemption.'

The woman closed her eyes, and with her frail arms clasped around his neck, her heart beating hard against his own, she abandoned herself to the fatal glamour of the past.

'You remember, *carissimo mio*, how we watched the sun sink far across the sea, a luminous red line circling the island of dreams? And we watched it together, and you whispered, "It is always twilight here, but out there——" and then the love in each

of us leaped out strong and radiant. I spoke of a husband and duty, only too eager to abandon both, and you murmured into my ear, "There is no force but passion, there is no law but love."

Her voice became fainter and fainter, and in the pallor on her face the man read the inexorable result of his own teaching.

'Hush, Stella! you are killing yourself, dearest—every instant you are killing yourself.'

'But it was *true*,' she whispered, 'what you told me, all the perfect colour and harmony of the larger life beyond. It was true, and when we went out to seek it together we would have found it, only, only——' and then she burst into tears.

'Only, only——' the man repeated, in a voice strange to both of them.

'Only, only——' sounded in the wind's moan through the rafters.

'Only, only'—in the dying woman lay the epitome of it all.

A long silence followed, and when the man thought she had passed into the forgetfulness of sleep he freed himself gently from her embrace. Her eyes opened.

'Eustace, you are not leaving me?'

'Only an instant, Stella. The lamp is burning downstairs, and I have not locked the hall door.'

'Don't leave me, Eustace,' she murmured. 'What does it matter about lamps and doors now? Nobody will come near us on a night like this. We are quite safe, Eustace. Don't leave me, not for an instant.'

He sat down again by her side. 'You are calmer now, dearest?' he whispered.

'Oh, yes; but there is one thing, Eustace, just one little thing I have to ask you.'

The terrible irony of these questions addressed to him was never more fully appreciated by her companion than at this moment.

'Eustace, I know the way you think about these things; but, dearest, I never could quite believe that in the AFTER it was all just blank nothingness. And, Eustace, supposing when I am dead a something of *me* lasts—a little spark of fire to be absorbed in the great World Spirit—Eustace, will that spark be sullied, tainted?'

She had spoken slowly, thinking out the short phrases one by one, but the last words fell from her lips with a fierce eagerness.

'Tainted? tainted?' she leaned on her left elbow and stared into his eyes.

'No, Stella,' he stammered; 'a thousand times no! It is the good, the pure that lingers, that survives.'

She leaned back again and drew his head to the pillow close beside her own. 'Yes, yes,' she muttered, 'the good, the little bit of good.' And then, as he kissed her, 'Eustace, when I am gone be kind to the Grey Wolf.'

She passed into the sleep of exhaustion, her feverish cheek pressing hard against his.

Hours passed as they slept motionless side by side, and then the man awoke, haggard with the grief that lingers on even in sleep. The lamp was still burning, and as he looked at her it was all too plain. Yes, she must die. He had poisoned this fair young life; and for *him*? He shuddered, and drew silently away from her as a murderer shrinks from the victim he loves. A terrible loneliness seized him; everything in life was here quite close to him, but in a day—a few hours? The restless torment of the night beat out its own monotonous answer. But she must die, calm and beautiful; he must watch over her to the end, only he on this desolate Irish coast. Yes, they must be alone, absolutely alone, right on to the end.

He looked around the room; its scanty furniture, its faded wall-paper, the dark curtains in gloomy contrast, with every one of these details and with their *ensemble* there was something which triumphed over all—the significance of death and the charm of a beautiful woman lingering on its threshold.

His watch lay on the table in front of him, and as he opened it another object met his eye. 'The key,' he muttered; 'I must go downstairs now that she is asleep.' And then, in a dazed way, he hesitated. Were they really alone now? He tried to picture the exact position of the furniture in the room below; the two chairs opposite to each other by the broad old-fashioned fireplace, *her* little footstool, the tiger skin thrown carelessly over the oak-stained floor, were they all just the same? He put on a smoking-jacket, lit a candle, and passed noiselessly out of the room, closing the door after him. Outside he hesitated again; the faint light streaming into the hall below startled him, and then he remembered that the lamp was still burning. The horror of the night was still on him as he crept down the stairs, shading the candle with his hand. Yes, the door was wide open, as he had left it,

and the hall door shut. He locked it, and now he must go in and extinguish the lamp.

The indefinable dread of entering this room puzzled him, and he glanced at his own reflection in a Venetian mirror, wondering vaguely if his brain were yielding. He saw the room reflected quite plainly, and he noticed that the fire was still burning. Everything was undisturbed; he could see it all so distinctly.

'I am becoming a poltroon,' he muttered, and then he started as though an icy hand had been laid upon his heart.

A gust of wind had extinguished the candle, and the hall was almost in darkness. The mirror revealed nothing now, but he had seen, just for one instant, something behind him in a far corner of the room—a crouching figure, just visible at that particular angle. Had he seen it, or had the mirror imaged only the terror of his soul?

The man stood for a minute or so as though turned to stone, and then a reaction set in, and he walked quietly into the room and placed the candlestick on the table in the centre.

Seated in a corner of the room, his feet stretched upon the fender, was the figure of a man. His head had fallen forward on his chest, and the upturned collar of a fur coat made it impossible to discern his features. His breath came low and regular, and he was fast asleep. Eustace Lefroy took the lamp from the table and placed it on the mantelpiece. The light now fell directly on the intruder, and doubt was no longer possible. It was indeed the Grey Wolf.

And as he watched the sleeper guilt, hatred, terror, the thousand and one emotions associated with this solitary man appeared to him meaningless. It was inevitable that they three should meet face to face for the last time. She should choose between them, the shadow of death mocking the pallid light of law. He felt that he had been *expecting* this, the last comment upon the littleness of life. It seemed to his paralysed intellect to settle everything, to give finality to failure, rightness to infamy, a meaning to all doubt. A smile of listless satisfaction rose to his lips as he studied the figure before him with critical minuteness.

The chest appeared to him more sunken, the face more haggard and drawn than he had anticipated. The harsh contracted features, the perpendicular wrinkles on the forehead, the grisly beard and whiskers, tangled and unkempt, the cold ferocity of the parted lips—all this appeared to him for the moment

merely a study in no wise connected with himself or with her. And then suddenly he roused himself from this inertia.

'The fear of him,' he said to himself, 'the fear of him,' ah! it was this which was killing her, it was this, this——

'You dog,' he hissed in the sleeper's ear, 'you wolf of the night, why are you here?'

'At last!'

They were facing each other now, and in that one exclamation everything had been said.

'Why are you here?'

The thin face lit up with a strange smile. 'Because you were lonely without me, you two.'

Eustace moved nervously towards the door, and the man leaped forward to bar his passage.

'Close the door,' said Eustace in a low voice.

'Ah!'

The smile died away, and the whole face appeared dull and grey in the lamplight. Eustace resumed his place on the rug, and the other followed him.

'I have tracked you to your lair at last; there is no chance for you now, none whatever.'

'I have asked for none.'

'Well, let it come at once!' The man fumbled in his pocket without turning his eyes from the other.

'No, it cannot come at once.'

'And why not? Do you wish a splash of melodrama at the last?'

'It cannot come now. I have said it.'

'And why not?' His voice shook with the intensity of hatred.

'Because,' said the other slowly, 'you would then be compelled to watch over the last hours of a woman who is dying from the fear of you.'

A moan of pain escaped the other, and something fell to the floor with a metallic ring. And then both men stood silent as a woman's piercing cry rang through the house.

'Pick that up,' said Lefroy sternly, 'and wait here.'

He left the room and rushed upstairs.

'Why did you leave me, Eustace? why did you leave me?'

She was only half conscious.

'Darling, it was only while you were sleeping; I will never leave you again. What frightened you, dear one?'

'Oh, it was a dream, a horrid dream. It is almost morning, and you said it would be gone by morning.'

'What, darling?'

'The dread of the Grey Wolf.'

He pressed his lips convulsively to hers, as intuition told him that the end was very near for both of them.

A change came over her.

'No, you mustn't take me from him. He's only got me to love in the whole wide world. He——'

'Hush, darling, hush!'

'You can go out into the sunlight beyond, but for him it is all cold darkness without me! He isn't beautiful and strong, like you, but I can't leave him—I won't.'

Her eyes were closed, but the terrible conflict of the past lived again in this delirium.

It was more than he could bear, and he turned his eyes from her face, only to meet those of the man he had wronged. He was standing by the open door, and his face appeared to Eustace ennobled, transfigured.

Her eyes opened. 'The Grey Wolf!' she shrieked. 'Oh, God! the Grey Wolf has come upon us at last!' She sank back and her hands clutched the bed-clothes.

'Stella!' cried two voices simultaneously, but each knew that there could be no answer.

'She was mine,' cried Lefroy fiercely, 'mine at the last, and now I in my turn am yours.'

The other covered him mechanically with his pistol. Every phase of feeling seemed to have died from his face, which was white as that of his dead wife.

He lowered the pistol and approached the bed.

The horror on the dead woman's lips seemed to fascinate him. He stared into her face for some minutes, and then he kissed her humbly on the forehead. He turned to Lefroy, who was standing with folded arms at the head of the bed. 'You caused this thing to be,' he said faintly. 'You made this picture of a husband and a wife; let it live in your memory, as in mine; that is the punishment for each.'

He stumbled out into the snow. And as Lefroy bent over the dead face, disfigured by the horror of life, he knew that he had been spared but not pardoned.

J. A. T. LLOYD.

SIR CHARLES NAPIER:

A STUDY.

IN an article published some time back in this magazine I have written of the youth of the Napiers. With the termination of the Peninsular War closes the record of that brotherhood united in battle. None of the Napiers was present at Waterloo; William reached the field but only after the fight; he remained for some years with the army of occupation in France, a residence made painful to him by his passionate cult of Napoleon; and when on his return it became apparent that another man of little service was about to purchase the command of the 43rd over his head, he retired on half-pay. About the same time George Napier also quitted active service, because the death of his wife left him alone in charge of young children, and he thought he could do them more justice in private life. In later years he governed the Cape with success and credit, a soldier who did everything to avoid war. Henry Napier, too, abandoned the navy and settled down into a retirement from which he never emerged.

Thus only Charles was left serving the king, but his activity was ceaseless in almost every quarter of the globe. He was called away from the Peninsula in 1812 to command a regiment stationed at Bermuda—a hateful inactivity, soon broken by a share in Admiral Cochrane's expedition to the American coast. Here bitter experience taught him the evils of a divided command; little was accomplished and no credit gained; and he returned home to join the military college at Farnham—for reading, to Charles Napier's mind, was no secondary part of a soldier's training. Thence in 1819 he went as inspecting field-officer to the Ionian Islands, then governed by Sir Thomas Maitland.

The cause of Greek independence had its full fascination for him, and he was sent on a mission to Ali Pasha, whom he advised to strong action. He failed here owing to the chief's nature, but generally the Greek character pleased him; he had not the ordinary Briton's intolerance of the qualities bred of a long servitude. And when in 1822 he was appointed Military Resident in Cephalonia (that is to say, the despotic lieutenant of the Lord

High Commissioner), he found himself for the first time in a position that fully harmonised with his bent and abilities. To govern in the old Roman way, absolute in his province, but to govern with a single eye to the good of the governed, and wear himself to the bone in doing justice and amending the face of the land—that was Charles Napier's notion of felicity. 'A too easy chair is the rack for me,' he writes; elsewhere, 'Incessant activity and bustle is heartsease to me, giving no time to be sick or sorry. The eternal judgment seat to punish delinquents is the worst part; yet even that is interesting when one acts with feelings for justice; it is painful to punish, but pleasing to protect.' Cephalonia was his training for Scinde; and the semi-feudal civilisation he found there did not much excel that of the Indus valley under the Ameers. He had his kingdom of 60,000 souls, to whom he was *despotis*, their autocrat. What he did there he may sum up himself: 'There I protected the poor, regulated justice, and executed really great works. Forty miles of road hewn out of the living rock, and many fine buildings, and horses with carts introduced into a country previously ignorant of them, were things to make a man feel he had lived for some good.' It is a record for any one to read who is interested in government. Napier was a Radical, but a Radical who realised that advanced political institutions are for fully developed societies; the rulers and the ruled he was the last man to confound, but he insisted that the ruler should rule, and not plunder. The story throws many sidelights, too, on the workings of the movement for Grecian freedom; and most interesting is his sketch of Byron. He saw Byron at the noblest moment in Byron's life, and the two men, both emphatically men, trusted and admired each other. Byron was anxious that Napier should assume command of the Greek forces, but this Napier, much as he desired it, would not do without making his position in the British army perfectly assured, and the home authorities looked on the scheme with disfavour.

For nine years he ruled Cephalonia, ceaselessly active and happy in his activity (in Scinde he sighs for 'the Cephalonian days when I laughed at eighteen hours under a scorching sun'); dealing out life and death with the instant sense of responsibility heavy on him, yet finding that 'power is never disagreeable;' and he only resigned because of a quarrel with his superior, Sir F. Adam, to whom Charles Napier's activity seemed no virtue but a dangerous comparison. Napier took the course he followed

through life, in defiance of the taciturn tradition of official departments; he wrote a memorial defending himself and strongly arraigning Sir F. Adam. It was a bold step, and for most men would have meant ruin. Napier was then fifty, with a family, and no capital laid by; and for eight years he had to eat his heart in enforced retirement. Political feeling ran high in those days. Charles and William Napier were conspicuous for opinions rare in their class; but in 1839 the Government, beset with terror of a Chartist rising, determined on a singularly bold and wise step. They appointed Charles Napier, who was known to hold with many points in the Charter (for instance, with the right of universal suffrage), to command the Northern district, embracing half of England, and incomparably the more dangerous half. The temper of the times was fierce: an indiscretion might have plunged England into civil war. Civilian magistrates were eager for strong measures: the soldier who had seen war had a wiser humanity. The same magistrates were desirous, every man of them, for troops told off for the protection of their houses; but the General sternly refused to fritter away his force in detachments, and kept it concentrated in great towns, and there, as far as possible, in barracks. The consequences of a mishap were terribly apparent to him: let a corporal's guard be overpowered, the military prestige would be shaken and revolt would spread like wildfire. Besides, even the troops themselves were touched with Chartism, and to quarter them in billets was to assimilate them with the people they lived among. Here is a curious passage from his letters:—'There are many Chartists among the Rifles. One in particular is an able fellow, but I have information of all he does and he is not a bad man. I told the Horse Guards this, and that I intended to speak to him rationally, as man to man.'¹ The Horse Guards suggested that one of his staff should interview him instead, but Napier shrewdly feared the results of such an experiment; his officers were more fit to fight than argue. 'The whole success or hope of it,' he adds, 'rested on my being known to hold the man's own opinions, and only differing as to the means taken to give them effect; upon the General himself reasoning with him, and upon my being an old Rifleman.'

Concerning the civilisation and the 'progress' which had brought about the conditions then existing, he holds the language of Mr. Ruskin: 'Manchester is the chimney of the world.'

¹ *Life of Sir Charles Napier*, vol. i. p. 51.

Hell may be paved with good intentions, but it is hung with Manchester cottons.'

Strangely enough, at an earlier period his brother William had been applied to, and more than once, to take the command of a military force which was to be organised to terrorise the Government into passing the Reform Bill—a 'national guard.' The proposal came from Erskine Perry and Charles Buller. But the soldier, like his brother, knew what was meant by the appeal to arms, and held back. Even in the bitterest opposition, also, his loyalty to old chiefs was never forgotten. None the less, he felt bitterly the Duke's opposition to reform. 'He is great only by the head, not by the heart,' he wrote.

In 1841 Charles Napier went to India to command the Bombay forces. From this time onward the union between the two brothers, so widely divided in space as never before, grew so intimate that William Napier may be said to have lived in vehement imagination the life that his brother led in so strenuous action. Charles Napier reached India in December 1841, the epoch of the Cabul disasters. Ill tidings came thick and fast, and Lord Ellenborough, arriving as Governor-General, applied to Napier for views 'upon the manner in which the honour of our arms may most effectually be re-established in Afghanistan.' It is impossible to separate this desire from the occupation of Scinde. The conquest of Scinde was not merely an acquisition of territory; it was a recovery of military prestige upon the North-West frontier. Charles Napier at once saw what was to come, and girded himself up for it. He is to be sent 'fifteen hundred miles off to command 20,000 men in a difficult war against natives defending one of the most difficult countries in the world: add to this, the worst part of the affair, a bad cause.'

Yet the inner passion of the man breaks out in these words: 'Who would be buried by a sexton in a churchyard rather than by an army on the field of battle?' 'To try my hand with an army is a *longing not to be described*.'¹ He set out amid horrors: cholera broke out on the steamer that took him to Kurrachee, and turned the ship into a kind of floating madhouse of men plague-stricken or drunken; fifty out of two hundred perished in three days. The General was untouched; yet outside Kurrachee in the disorder they narrowly escaped shipwreck; and three days after he landed, in artillery practice a rocket mis-

¹ Italics mine.—S. G.

carried, and cut his leg almost to pieces. But in ten days he was steaming up the Indus, already full of schemes for fertilising the waste places and for making Kurrachee a great harbour-mart, through which should pass all the commerce of that huge valley. Already we hear no more of the 'bad cause;' misgovernment is grossly apparent; a country laid waste in game forests; feudalism in its most barbarous forms everywhere present. The Ameers who then ruled Scinde held by right of a conquest dating back some sixty years, and they ruled as a conquering race who ground down the native Scindees with a heavy heel. 'They are tyrants, and so are we; but the poor will have fairer play under our sceptre than under theirs.' 'We have no right to seize Scinde, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, and humane piece of rascality it will be.' 'The more powerful government must inevitably and at no distant period swallow up the weaker: would it not be better to come to that result at once?' His tone grows more and more confident, more emphatic. He has pity on the poor Scindees, who are seen to pick grains out of horses' dung for food; tax-wrung to the last, 'they live in a larder, yet starve.' 'The robber is master' in the rich alluvial soil round the Indus, where grain shoots up twelve feet high. There is no system of irrigation, and the spirit of his Cephalonian times is strong in him when he desires to 'curb this wild river.' 'If I can lay the first stone of a system that will give life and humanity to the Indus, my life will not be in vain, and I think I shall do so.' That is the thought he is happy in, the heart-ease of his life; the indescribable longing for command is a passion, but one consciously rebuked. When he surveys his picturesque and far-reaching encampment at Alore, a town built by Alexander the Great (the memory of the old Western conqueror in these regions is never far from his mind), he writes: 'My God, how humbled I am when I think! How I exult when I behold! . . . A little wretched experience in the art of killing is all the superiority that I their commander can boast of.'

I am here concerned not to discuss the policy of Scindian conquest, only to trace the workings of Napier's mind. They are not obscure. 'If I thought,' he writes, 'Lord Ellenborough was acting on an unjust plan, I would, of course, obey my orders, but should deeply regret my position. But *I do no such thing*.'¹ And why? Always the same answer. 'The richness of the soil

¹ Italics mine.—S. G.

is indescribable ; it is Egypt ; yet waste and desolate because the robber rules ; when he falls, the peasant may cultivate in safety, not till then.'

That was his justification of himself to himself on grounds of general humanity. As an imperial necessity, the matter appeared to him not less plain. Afghanistan, when he went to Scinde, was scattered over with British forces detached from each other and from their base. These forces painfully, and in some cases ingloriously, extricated themselves from that dangerous country ; as Napier said, though we could claim to have conquered, we had rather been kicked out than gone out. On the Punjab frontier the Sikh power hung like a thundercloud, and the British name had lost its terror. His duty in Scinde, as he conceived it, was to retrieve the imperial prestige ; and to this end he would accept nothing less from the Ameers than unconditional obedience. The political staff whom he found in the country, with Outram at their head, advised him that the Ameers had no sinister purpose. Napier believed, and the event justified him, that they were bent upon expelling the English, and only deferred overt revolt till the summer should have given them the terrible sun for an ally. The original treaty forbidding them to levy tolls on the Indus had been infringed and was infringed while he was in the country ; a penal treaty was substituted, and, though they nominally accepted this, letters of the Ameers were brought in urging the hill tribes to a rising, and it was apparent that armies were being drawn together. Napier decided to strike first. He was at Sukkur, two hundred miles north of Hyderabad, the stronghold of the Ameers' power ; Khyrpoor, their northern capital, which was within twenty miles of him, he could terrorise. But on the left of his line of march southward lay the Scindian desert, and in that desert was the great fortress of Emaumghur, supposed inaccessible to Europeans. Napier was determined first to cut off the enemy from their retreat into the desert. He was sixty years old, and he had never before commanded an army in the field ; but his first operation was to march southward along the eastern border of the Indus valley, and on January 5, 1843, he struck out into the desert with 350 soldiers of the 22nd Regiment mounted on camels, 200 of the Scinde Horse, and two 24-pounder guns. One hundred and fifty of the horse had to be sent back at the end of the first march ; the guns had in many instances to be run up steep sandhills by the men ; a day's march covered only ten

miles; but on January 12 the force reached Emaumghur to find the place evacuated. It was a great castle, with walls forty feet high, well stored with powder; Napier blew it up in one huge explosion, and made his way back across the rolling sandwaves—the expression borrowed by Sir Francis Doyle in his famous poem is used repeatedly in the journal.

Wellington, not lavish of his praise, wrote: ‘Sir Charles Napier’s march upon Emaumghur is one of the most curious military feats I have ever known to be performed or have ever perused an account of in my life. He moved his troops through the desert against hostile forces; he had his forces transported under circumstances of extreme difficulty, and in a manner the most extraordinary; and he cut off a retreat of the enemy which rendered it impossible for them ever to regain their position.’

The same wise boldness which he showed in this his first enterprise was the mark of his action throughout. War was not even yet counted for certain; Napier had taken with him Ali Murad, the Ameer who was master of Emaumghur, and secured his nominal consent to the work of destruction; he still believed that the Ameers might be overawed, and readily granted Outram leave to proceed to Hyderabad and negotiate; but while doing so he steadily advanced southward. The Ameers parleyed interminably, endeavoured to induce Napier to come in person into Hyderabad; but, failing in their object, attacked the Residency. Outram beat off the assailants and escaped by river to rejoin Napier. On February 17 was fought the battle of Meeanee, and on the 19th Hyderabad surrendered, and Napier took up his quarters there; but the war was not over. Shere Mohammed, the Lion of Meerpoor, who with 12,000 men was advancing to join the other Ameers at Meeanee, was still undefeated, and was their best soldier; Napier’s force was still insignificant in comparison with the multitudes about him. He was, however, speedily reinforced by the men from north and south, and on March 24 attacked the Lion at Dubba, six miles from Hyderabad. The disparity of numbers was not so great as at Meeanee; Shere Mohammed had some 25,000 against Napier’s 5,000; but his army was in a strong position, and the Beloochees fought desperately. But the European army had the confidence of victory, and the result was never for a moment in doubt. At Meeanee things were very different. There Napier was able to put into line barely 2,000 men; the enemy numbered probably rather over

30,000 than under. Owing to the smallness of the European force, any attempt to turn the Belooch position was impossible. The smaller force advanced straight against the long line of enemies, who were protected in great part by a deep nullah, and the battle was fought hand to hand. Yet a chance gave to the General that opportunity to avail himself of chance which marks a great commander. On the left of the Belooch position was a wood screened by a wall, which advanced at an angle from the Belooch line. In this wall was one gap, and as the British advanced to a point nearly level with this gap, Napier saw that troops were posted in the wood, ready to rush through the gap upon the British flank when the two lines became engaged. 'I saw,' he writes, 'that the wall was not loopholed and had no banquette, because a man sitting astride on the top and firing matchlocks at us evidently stooped to reach them from men on the ground who handed them up. There were no heads on the wall either, which I well knew discipline could not have prevented had there been a banquette.' Instantly, therefore, he detached a company under Captain Tew, bidding him to block the gap, and if necessary die there. The officer carried out his orders to the letter; with sixty men he held the thousands who were in the wood back behind the wall till the British line had got between them and the main body, breached the wall, and turned artillery upon the masses thus penned up; and he died in doing it.

But the main battle was fought breast to breast. Musket was to matchlock what breechloader was to muzzle-loader; but what decided the fight was the close order which the bayonet admits as against the loose order required to use the sword. For three hours and a half the lines were not three yards apart. Napier himself was obliged to go to the front and rally the 22nd and the 25th Native Infantry, and being in the front he could not retire. A year later he wrote in his journal, looking back :

'When in the fight I held my life as gone; for as to escaping, all idea of that vanished when I saw the 22nd giving way and was obliged to ride between the fires of two lines not twenty yards apart. I expected death as much from our men as the enemy, and I was much singed by our fire; my whiskers twice or thrice so, and my face peppered by fellows who in their fear fired high over all heads but mine, and nearly scattered my brains. In agony I rode, holding my reins with a broken hand' (he had sprained it a few days before), 'and quite unequal to a single combat, had a

Beloochee picked me out, as one was about to do when Marston slew him.' Lieutenant Marston of the 25th had thrown himself between, and received on his shoulder a blow intended for the General. 'It cut nearly through the brass scales on Marston's shoulder,' Napier writes elsewhere: 'the red ribbon will not grace mine more.' All the journals and letters after Meeanee are full of records of the valour of his subordinates. When a medal was decreed to the troops, he wrote to Lord Ellenborough:

'Whilst the officers and soldiers received nothing, my ribbon sat uncomfortably on my shoulder; now I can meet Corporal Tim Kelly and Delany the bugler without a blush.' These men were his orderlies at Dubba and Meeanee—Delany at Meeanee. 'Three times, when I thought the 22nd could not stand the furious rush of the swordsmen, Delany sounded the advance, and each time the line made a pace or two nearer the enemy.' 'Here be it recollected' (adds William Napier) 'that the fighting was hand to hand, that each pace in advance was under a descending sword, and that to sound his bugle Delany resigned all self-defence.' Two more things should be recorded. After the action the 22nd gave the General three cheers on the field; but they had cheered him once already in the heat of the fight. And the despatch relating the day of Meeanee was the first in which a British General recorded by name the merit of non-commissioned officers and privates.

It is outside the purpose of this paper to follow Napier in his task of organising European rule in Scinde—a task more congenial to him than conquest. But the deadly quarrel with Outram which sprang out of these cannot be passed over; it has a painful prominence in Sir William's Life of his brother; and one may at least suggest certain considerations. Outram wrote to his mother a few days before Meeanee: 'Sir Charles Napier is fortunately so good and kind-hearted a man that he would never drive the Ameers to extremity as long as he could prevent bloodshed.' Outram was called 'the Bayard of British India'; it was Sir Charles Napier at a public banquet who fixed the name upon him. While they were in personal relations, they differed absolutely upon policy, but they admired and, one may say, loved each other. It was when Outram went home that third persons repeated words of his to William Napier, infinitely more jealous of his brother's fame than that brother himself; and, owing to an unhappy punctiliousness, the two men never met. Had they met I cannot but think the quarrel would never have arisen;

as it was, Charles Napier and Outram 'each spoke words of high disdain and insult to his heart's best brother.' But the whole quarrel arose, one may say, entirely through third persons' interference; and in the pursuit of it William and Charles Napier were what Charles Napier himself calls them—vindictive. There was no want of cause; the attacks of the Indian press were outrageous and insufferable; and unhappily all these were credited to Outram and his friends. Yet even out of this rancour sprang a noble and touching episode. William Napier wrote heedlessly bitter and unjustifiable words about Outram's brother who had committed suicide in India; his notice of the fact was the first announcement of the truth to Mrs. Outram, and she wrote to him a letter, terrible in its forgiveness. He answered her:

MADAM,—Your solemn and to me terrible letter has reached me, and to it I can give no answer. I hope God will pardon the pain I have given you, though unintentional; I say unintentional, as it was a careless transcribing of a passage never intended for publicity, and to which publicity ought not to have been given. I pray God may alleviate the suffering of your aged heart, and the self-reproach I feel. I can say no more.

W. NAPIER.

This letter may close the question; it showed to Outram (one reads gladly) the true nature of the man whom he had so misjudged and who had so bitterly misrepresented him.

The quarrel arose from a misunderstanding, not so the original divergence of view. Napier's conquest was only the first step; his government of Scinde was a new departure in Indian history. To impress the natives by a show of simplicity, vigour, and energy, rather than by ostentation, luxury, and self-seclusion, was his principle. The political agent used to have four silver sticks carried before him at durbars; Napier sold the sticks for the Company's benefit, and put four soldiers with bayonets in their place. And the system he instituted became recognised as that of military rule contrasted with the civilian government, of which Lawrence was the greatest example. Napier governed a people whose language he did not know, but they perfectly understood his action: it followed a simple, undeviating line. And it is doubtful whether a European does not best govern Asiatics when he holds himself most entirely aloof from their characteristic methods and their ways of thought. Men who loved work loved

to be under Napier; but a man's work, he held, must be a man's enjoyment. 'An officer of irregular horse should never quit the saddle when he is on duty,' he wrote in anger after neglect that had cost life; and what he said, his example made good. His word was life and death in Scinde; he was supreme in a country governed by martial law. 'Against all evidence in suits, I decide in favour of the poor (well knowing they do not go to law without cause in such a country), and argue against the evidence of the Government people as long as I can.' He hangs men relentlessly, but not pitilessly. 'I am right, yet miserable,' is his cry. 'I am a man whose daily occupation is to deal with the lives of his fellow-men, and therefore standing on the brink of damnation: for if I do not deeply consider ere acting, murder is on my head.' 'Christ and Socrates eschewed public service, and in nothing was their wisdom more shown.'

One of the chief trials of public service to him was the perpetual misrepresentation of his acts. Accusations of incompetence he could disregard. But when he was charged with carelessness because a sickness decimated the troops under his command, the charge struck him in a tender point, for no man ever was more anxious for their welfare. And when the charge involved scandal against the conduct of his officers, it was more than he could bear. When Hyderabad was occupied after Meeanee, the victorious General left the Ameers in their palaces and lived himself in his tent under that appalling sun. Yet he was charged with cruelty to the captives. He was so solicitous for the honour of the princes' women that he left them and their attendants absolute freedom to come and go in their quarters, though by this means they were enabled to carry off over two millions, which would else have been booty, and, what was of more concern to Napier, the zenana became a centre of intriguing correspondence with Shere Mohammed and his threatening forces. Yet he and his officers were accused of having insulted the Ameers' women. Shere Mohammed judged him differently. A convoy was coming under Major Stack, in ignorance of the situation; it was laden with baggage, and there were European ladies with it. Shere Mohammed's troops attacked, and might have cut off the baggage, but, hearing that women were with it, he called his men off because he said Napier had respected the royal women in Hyderabad. But Napier was to give a still more conspicuous example of a chivalry which bordered on Quixotism.

In 1845 he undertook his campaign against the robber tribes of the Cutchee hills—the Bhoogtees and Jackranees—under their leader, Beja Khan. It was just such a campaign, though on a smaller scale, as that which Sir William Lockhart conducted in the Tirah country; but it differed in this respect, that Napier worked with very small bodies of picked men under officers formed by himself; it differed also exceedingly in the matter of success. By rapidity of movement, Napier came up with the enemy before he had taken to the hills, and defeated him at two points; Beja Khan, retiring, found his familiar line of retreat blocked by native allies whose movements had been pre-arranged. On Jan. 22, Napier writes in his journal:

‘I could easily have caught Beja Khan, and I can now catch him as he passes by a flank march across my front; but as he marches with his families, it is most probable he would cut their throats if menaced, and I want to avoid such a dreadful catastrophe.’

It was the custom of the Beloochees and the surrounding tribes to tell off men to destroy the women if there were a chance of their being captured. Napier, in a desert where he had to dig for water, in a country where many armies had perished, refused his advantage to let the robbers get their incumbrance out of harm’s way. By such acts has been established the state of feeling which taught the Afridis in the Tirah war to send their women into Peshawar. The campaign was thus prolonged for six weeks. Napier had 800 European infantry, 500 Sepoys, 10 guns, 600 cavalry, and 1,000 more in reserve below the mountains, and felt secure; the tribes were said to be 18,000 men strong fighting in their own mountains. But these warriors were hunted from the valleys by a series of carefully laid combinations, till at last they took shelter in their famous stronghold, Truckee, which is entered by two chasms—one at the north, one at the south. Napier describes it:

‘This famous hold is about twelve miles in length, with an average of six in breadth. The interior is a mass of small rocky hillocks with precipitous sides; so that in any part a strong position could be occupied in this enormous crater, for such it appears to be.’

His plans were laid for storming it when the chiefs surrendered in a body; the only fight that had taken place was due to an accident; but it is famous in Sir Francis Doyle’s poem, ‘The Red Cord of Honour.’ Napier himself, with a scouting party,

hit on the southern opening of Truckee, and instantly sent word to Captain Beatson to move round and occupy the northern outlet. He tells what happened :

‘ When Beatson first reached the northern entrance he pushed in, but a sergeant and ten men of the 13th got on the wrong side of a small ravine, and came to the foot of a rocky platform crowned by the enemy, and where the ravine suddenly deepened to a frightful chasm. The sergeant saw his officer and the main body beyond gesticulating, because they saw the enemy above; they were beckoning to retreat, he thought it was to go on, and at once the stern veterans climbed the rock. As they leaped on to the platform, the enemy, eighty in number, fell on them sword in hand, and the fight was desperate. Seventeen hillmen were slain, six of the soldiers, and the rest, wounded and overborne, were dashed over the edge and rolled down. Such are British soldiers ! Where mortal man can stand in fight, they will. Every man of these had a medal ; two of them had three on their breasts ! They died gloriously, but uselessly, on that sad cliff in the Cutchee hills : never was the Douranee decoration so honoured ! Their deaths have cast a glorious halo round that order ! ’

‘ These,’ William Napier adds, ‘ were the deeds Lord Ripon forgot ! But the names of these gallant men are recorded in the history of the Scinde Administration, and their enemies, more susceptible of generous emotions, thus testified to their heroism. Among the tribes, when a warrior dies with noted bravery, a red or green string is tied round the wrist of the corpse, the red being of most honour ; here, before casting the bodies of the slain down from the platform, they tied a red string on both wrists ! ’

It should be noted one of the eleven was a sepoy ; he was among the five survivors. William Napier’s indignant commentary is not surprising. The despatch describing this whole campaign, which may rank among the most remarkable achievements in mountain warfare, was suppressed by Lord Ripon, then President of the Board of Control ; Lord Ellenborough, who had been recently recalled from India, where he had consistently backed Napier, insisted that it should be published. Lord Ripon explained that he had forgotten it. But, indeed, after the first flush of success and the first joy in seeing the advancing settlement of the country he had conquered, the latter days of Charles

Napier's life were bitter to him : embittered by over-exertion in a fatal climate, by cholera that ravaged the human beings under his care, and hardly left him time to bury his own dear dead ; by misrepresentation in the press and Parliament ; and worst of all by the thwarting of his work. In 1847 his wife's health failed, and rather than leave her he resigned. He went home from his Scinde command in bitter anger with the Company, and his anger was outspoken. He was received with praise in England, 'and in Ireland, dear Ireland, with glory.' He was petted and fêted, and disliked it : he was summoned to dine at Osborne, and had to borrow a fine waistcoat from his valet. (Prince Eugene, in Queen Anne's days, had to furnish himself with a periwig in the like fashion and with a like scorn.) Then came—in 1849—the news of Chillianwallah and Gough's Pyrrhic victory. The nation was frightened, and with one voice it cried out for Charles Napier as Commander-in-Chief ; the Company resisted, and even offered the command to Sir George Napier, who of course declined, saying that his brother had an obvious claim. They had no choice but to eat their leek. Napier was full of high schemes, and came to find the war ended ; he tried to do a work of more worth than victories by reforming the Indian army ; but, like almost every previous Commander-in-Chief, he quarrelled with the Government and had to resign in 1851. Six years later the Mutiny endorsed in red what he had been urging as to the temper of the native troops. He made many enemies, and left a name for sternness.* One lad he broke, confirming a court-martial sentence. His widowed mother interceded, and Napier sent her money of his own to purchase a new commission. She took it and boasted of it as given for hush-money. Space fails me ; but I must quote from his journal one last and most characteristic passage upon the passion for command :

'The feeling that when battle comes on like a storm, thousands of brave men are rushing to meet it, confident in your skill to direct them, is indescribable ; it is greater than the feeling of gladness after victory—far greater indeed—for *the danger being then over,*¹ and brave men lying scattered about, dead or dying, the spirit is sad. Oh ! there is no pleasure after a battle beyond rejoicing that you have escaped being slain. But when the columns bear upon an enemy, as the line of battle forms, as it moves majestically onwards to conquer or die, as the booming of

¹ Italics mine—S. G.

the cannon rolls loud and long, amidst pealing shouts and musketry, then a man feels able for his work, and confident in his gifts, and his movements tell upon the enemy. *There is no feeling to equal that exaltation which makes men seek to become conquerors, if religion does not aid reason to hold it in check.*

He died on August 27, 1853. By a fine inspiration his son-in-law caught up the old colours of the 22nd that had been in the front of his eastern battles, and waved them over him as life departed. He was buried in the military graveyard at Portsmouth, with no common though a private funeral. Sixty thousand persons of all ranks were there; the whole garrison of Portsmouth came unbidden. George Napier had died already; so had Henry. William, whose whole latter life was devoted to defending and chronicling his brother's actions, lived long enough to complete that Life of him from which I have quoted so much, and which I take to be all but the best biography ever written, if the best biography be that which gives the most living picture of the man. The most fitting epitaph, the most fitting word to be spoken of the whole brotherhood is the blazon concerning which Charles Napier wrote :

'I could prove to India and England that I have served both with clean hands, clear conscience, and with an honour so pure that my family motto, SANS TACHE, should be given if I had it not.'

STEPHEN GWYNN.

THE DIRE PERIL OF SERGEANT SELLS.

THE Night-Owl and Slim Jim and Maddy Slade, to say nothing of the other man, who had stuck up the police magistrate of Barren Plains and taken 400% for his ransom, were coming to the conclusion that he had bought his life too cheaply. Certain it was that since the sticking up of MacDonald there had been no rest for them. They had crossed the border again to their old haunts on the Victorian side, in the mountains about the head-waters of the Murray, but the police were too active for their comfort. It was watch day and night. The wild dogs that had their lairs among the stones and rocks in the hills led a more peaceful life.

'My word,' said Slim Jim, 'it was a bad day for us when we stuck up the beak at Barren Plains.'

'He keeps them others hot on our track,' said Maddy thoughtfully.

She was lying at full length along a shelf of rock staring up at the roof of the cave above her. Her pretty face looked fagged and weary, there were lines in it and dark hollows under the eyes. A hunted life among the hills was no life for a woman, thought Slim Jim pitifully, and now the wind that was rushing down the gully was like a breath from a furnace, and here was all the long hot day to be got through.

'If the traps find me here they'll have to take me,' she said wearily, looking across at her companion. 'I'd rather be dead than move a step.'

'Why don't you cut it, Maddy?' he asked. 'You ain't as deep in as we are, an' it's a dog's life.'

She smiled faintly and he went on.

'Surely you ain't stoppin' for Pete—now, now?'

'No, I don't believe I'm a-stopping for Pete—not now. I was a blamed fool 'bout him once't, but—but—— Why don't you cut it yourself, Jim?'

'I'm goin' to first chance. Down South Australia way they want farm hands bad, every one on 'em's cut for the goldfields. There won't be many questions asked, you bet, if a chap keeps straight.'

The woman—she was but a girl in years, though the hard life had set its seal on her face—turned and looked at him wistfully.

Once not so very long ago he had been at her beck and call; it was for her sake he was an outlaw with a price upon his head. Then, when she cared so little, she had been all in all to him and her wish was his law, but now—now—when she was weary and worn out, when it was growing upon her that Slim Jim was her very life, he talked calmly of leaving her, leaving her to such a life.

She sighed and clasped her hands together. No woman likes to give herself away, not even a poor outcast such as this, the worn and faded mistress of the Night-Owl, worn and faded before she was twenty.

Slim Jim heard the sigh. 'O Maddy,' he said with a sudden burst of passion, 'and it might have been so different!'

She put her hands before her face and burst into tears. 'It was my fault,' she moaned, 'mine—mine. God! it was my fault. I brought you to this, an' what'll I do without you?'

He put out his hand and touched hers gently. 'It's a dog's life, Maddy,' he said. 'I've been stoppin' on 'cos I thought I helped you some.'

'You did, you did,' she sobbed; 'O my God! you do. How'll I do without you?'

'Maddy, I can't stop much longer. The Night-Owl an' me—if he don't kill me, I'll kill him an' be hanged for it. And, Maddy, you're the Night-Owl's girl, you know.'

She drew herself to a sitting posture, and the colour crept slowly to her cheeks. 'Not now,' she said, 'not now. He's dead sick of me this long while—an'—an'—there's a woman down on the Buckland.'

'O Maddy! Poor girl!'

'No, no, I'm glad, I'm that thankful. Jim, I was mad, I think, once't, an' now I hate him.'

Slim Jim turned away with a sigh. If she had spoiled his life she had spoiled her own, but oh the pity of it! And he could not—no, he could not—take the Night-Owl's leavings.

'Don't mind me, Jim,' said Maddy, quietly wiping her eyes and lying back on her earthy couch. 'I'm all right. I can take care of myself, but you cut, first chance. You've been better to me than any man in the world, and I'm that thankful I can't tell you. Now you look out for yourself an' cut.'

'Who's goin' to cut?' asked a red-headed man, coming into the cave from outside. 'Can't cut far with a fire like this.'

'Fire, Pete!' Maddy sat up. 'Is there a fire?'

'Is there a fire?' jeered the Night-Owl. 'Can't you smell it? The biggest bush fire since the country was settled, an' I guess I've done for the trap. Where's Blue Charlie?'

Maddy looked round carelessly. 'I'm sure I don't know. He ain't been here this long while.'

'Well, if he gets caught in the fire 'tain't no fault of mine. He's a blasted idiot if he can't look out for himself.'

In truth, though it was not ten o'clock in the morning it was growing quite dark. The sun was visible as a round red ball hanging in the dense pall of smoke, the wind roared hot and horrible down the gully, and on its breath came borne sheets of bark and burning branches and leaves. Only dimly through the driving smoke could they see the other side of the gully; the mountain at its head was invisible, and so was its mouth, hidden by the clouds of driving smoke.

Maddy looked out and drew in a mouthful of smoke that made her choke.

The Night-Owl laughed and gave her a push, which sent her stumbling across to her own platform again.

'Oh, Charlie will be killed!' she cried.

'Serve 'im right, too,' said the Night-Owl, 'but I guess he's pretty tough. I heard you talkin' 'bout cuttin'. I guess you'd better. I'm goin' to cut myself now. I guess I've made things too hot to hold us any longer.'

Maddy looked across wearily at Slim Jim. What new villany was this? 'What 've you done, Pete?' she asked.

'It's the sergeant this time,' chuckled Pete. 'Sergeant Sells himself. I guess his goose is about cooked.'

'Have you killed him?'

'Killed him? D—— your eyes, you bet the Night-Owl can go one better'n that.'

'What have you done with him then?' asked Slim Jim, rising to his feet.

There was a threatening look in his eyes, and the Night-Owl laid his hand on his pistols.

'Look here, young feller, none o' that now. You leave the trap an' me to work it out our own way.'

'What did you do to him?'

'Not much. Guess his horse had most to do with it. I was comin' down by Derwent Jack's when I see suthin' on the ground, an' I'm blest if it warn't Sergeant Sells. His horse has chucked him an' broke his leg, so he said, an' he oughter know. It had left for home an' he was lyin' there.'

'Pete, what did you do?' asked the woman breathlessly.

'Do? I'd a long score agin that sergeant. I sorter guessed he couldn't make for home with one leg, but just to make sure I tipped a log that was handy on to him. He's right in the track of the fire; he'll shrivel, sure enough.'

Slim Jim rose up and caught him by the throat. 'They say you're the devil's own,' he said, 'and I b'lieve you are.'

He swayed him backwards and forwards for a moment, then he flung him down.

'Where? Derwent Jack's? Along the track? It's mighty lonely at any time. An' the fire's comin' right down along it. I'll have to help him if I die for it.'

'Do,' snarled the bushranger on the ground, 'just do an' the traps 'll be comin' along after his d——d nag, an' they'll ketch you friskin' along an' string you up for aidin' an' abettin', if they don't shoot on sight.'

'I'll have to risk it,' said Slim Jim.

'An' the fire'll ketch you,' went on the other. 'He's likely roast meat by now. An' a d——d good riddance to the pair of you.'

But Slim Jim was outside and into the cave where they kept the horses, with the girl beside him.

'O Jim, take care of yourself!'

'Yes, yes.'

'An' if you can save the sergeant, if it ain't too late, likely he'll be able to help you outer this.'

'I dunno.'

Ordinary outsiders had not much faith in the kindness of the police in those days. What chance would a bushranger have?

He was mounted now on the best of the three horses the little hollow in the hills contained.

'Look here, Maddy, I've washed my hands of the gang. I believe Blue Charlie's cut. We must leave the Night-Owl to himself. I'll do the best I can for the sergeant, an' then I'll come back here an' see what I can do for you. I won't desert

you, my girl. You wait here for a bit an' I'll turn up as soon as I can.'

It was rough work clambering down the hillside, and the pungent smoke was in his nostrils and blinding his eyes; the way was steep and rocky too, but the active little horse was surefooted as a cat, and she slipped and slid and scrambled down that hillside in the murky darkness, in a way that astonished Slim Jim himself. Down this hill, up the next and down its rocky side again among the ti-tree and native cherry and golden wattle, and there at the bottom of the gully lay the track which ran past Derwent Jack's, four miles away. Only four miles, but the wind was blowing a hurricane, it was dark as night almost now, and the round red globe that hung in the north but faintly illumined the pall that spread over the earth. Slim Jim was up on top of the ridge now, and the gully beneath on either hand was hidden in rolling smoke. He paused to give his mare breathing space, and he listened intently. There was the wind howling, there was the swish and moan of it as it swept through the tree-tops, and was it fancy that above the howling of the blast he could hear the crackling of the flames?

Hardly. Some leaves all alight swept out of the burning darkness, into which he must force the mare, and she started back and snorted in affright. Jim stopped. Should he go on? Was it not certain death? Death sure and horrible. It would do Sergeant Sells little good if he too died just because the Night-Owl had been a fiend incarnate. Some time the searchers would find the two blackened corpses, and if they knew who he was they would never guess the errand on which he had come. Better turn back now, now while there was yet time. He had promised to take care of Maddy; he would turn back and join her, and they two could make their escape to South Australia. After this fire the confusion would be so great that they might easily slip away unnoticed, and once there— Ah, once there, what was Maddy to him, what could she ever be to him?—Maddy—Maddy, whom he remembered so bright and confident and lovable only eighteen months ago, and now—now she was just the cast-off mistress of the Night-Owl, a man who was not only a bushranger and an outlaw—he was that himself—but at least his hands were clean. He had killed a trap, certainly, but that was in the heat of battle; he had not stained his hands with blood since, and to be mixed up with him in a thing that was worse than the most cold-blooded murder he had ever heard of! No, if it cost him

his life he would save Sergeant Sells, and if he too died in the effort—well, what matter? There was not much to live for.

His eyes were streaming with tears now, the acrid smoke made them smart. It got into his lungs and brought on a paroxysm of coughing; the strong wind kept pushing him back, urging him, it seemed, away from the danger it was sweeping down on him so fast.

There was a red glow in the sky now, and it was all he could do to force his horse forward; she shrank and shivered and backed till he was obliged to dismount and lead her. And all the while it seemed to him the face of Maddy Slade went on before him—not Maddy hollow-eyed and weary as he had left her, but Maddy bright, sparkling and roguish, with just a touch of softness in her bright dark eyes—Maddy as she was once, before sorrow had come upon her—Maddy as she might be again if they came out of this with honour, if they saved the sergeant, and—— Woa, good horse, come on, come on. We're quite close now—the smoke is in your eyes and in your nostrils—it is nothing, nothing—the lighted leaves that fall on you are like red-hot coals. It is nothing, nothing; they hardly leave a mark, and once we have found him we race for safety.

There was an ominous glow now on the dark cloud right ahead, and on either side it was dark, a hot darkness that might be felt. He knew he must turn soon, but it must be somewhere hereabouts, and he tied his neckerchief over the mare's eyes, pulled his hat down over his own, and coo-eyed at the top of his voice.

And the man he was looking for was within ten yards of him. The Night-Owl had not thought it necessary to move him out of the track; who was likely to come along there when all the homesteads in the countryside were fighting for existence? Sergeant Sells realised this thoroughly. He lay there on his back on the hard ground and listened to the howling of the wind, and watched the smoke rushing thicker and thicker across the heavens. The pain of his broken leg pinned down by the heavy log seemed to dull his faculties, and for a little he could think of nothing else but the pain and how he was to bear it. He raised himself on his elbow and tried to push at the log, and then fell back with a groan. He might as well have tried to push the mountain itself. If he only had a pistol and could die—die now and end it all. It was not death he feared, only that it should come in this horrible form. The world knew well enough his life had been a

dead failure, but, O God! what agony this was! If he could only die now. The fire was coming quickly, the smoke grew thicker and thicker; it was dark up above now, but here close to the ground where he lay the air was purer than anywhere else; he was not likely to suffocate till the flames were right upon him. The Night-Owl—God! he was a beast of prey—a beast—no, no beast could have thought of a death so lingering and horrible. And the pain in his leg grew worse and worse, but he knew—he knew it would not kill him.

He looked up above him, and dimly through the gloom he could see the branches of the great gum trees bending before the wild wind. The sun was a bright crimson ball at first, then the clouds drifted across it and dimmed it to the colour of blood, and then—gradually—gradually it faded out till it was a faint blotch on the dark grey enveloping clouds, and a glow that was not the sun began spreading and spreading on either hand.

It was coming, it was coming; he put his hands behind his head and raised himself up to look, though the pain in his leg was agonising. This death would be more painful and horrible still. The trees seemed to burst into little flashes of light, as one may see the prisoned gas in a coal fire do. It was come then, it was come; he fell back and closed his eyes. If that fiend had only left him his pistols! The place was like an oven, but he could not die yet for all his pain, not till it was a burning fiery furnace would his end come.

What was that? God! Through the smoke and murk it came, and it sounded like a coo-ey. He started up, and the wrench he gave his leg laid him flat again.

Who could possibly be coo-eying here? No one but the Night-Owl knew of his dilemma, and, much as he might wish to gloat over his helplessness, he would not be the man to put his life in danger to do it, and any one coo-eying was in imminent danger of his life. Already the fire was sweeping across the country. It was the howling of the wind, or he was getting light-headed. Light-headed, thank God!

'My God!' he prayed, 'do this thing for me, this thing. Put me out of my misery quick, make me light-headed that I may not know.'

Then there came another coo-ey, long drawn, clear, above the howling wind and the moaning branches and the crackling of the fire, and close beside him, 'Coo-o-o-ey!'

His lips were parched and dry, and his tongue felt too large for his mouth. Was he light-headed? Was God answering his prayer? Then, in spite of the pain it caused him, he raised himself on his elbows and answered back with another long drawn-out coo-ey. And he fell back cursing himself for a fool. Who could it be but the Night-Owl coming to gloat over him?

He put his arm across his face and wiped the sweat away with his sleeve. It could be but the Night-Owl. Then out of the heavy smoke wreaths—there were little dancing flames above his head—there stepped a man with his hand before his face, and behind him came a horse. And the man stooped over him and peered into his face with bleared, smoke-reddened eyes.

‘Sergeant Sells?’

‘Yes,’ he said, feeling like one speaking in a dream, ‘but it’ll be all up with both of us soon. Who are you? Better clear out, young fellow, while you can.’

‘I came for you,’ said Slim Jim laconically. ‘Hold the mare,’ and he put the reins into his hands, ‘hold her for all you’re worth. She’s all we have to depend on now.’

Sells gripped the reins mechanically, and the mare stood quietly enough now that her eyes were bandaged. She pawed the earth a little, but she did not offer to break away.

Slim Jim caught the end of the log that was across the sergeant’s knees. It was not very heavy for him standing in an upright position, though it had served effectually to prison Sells; but then his leg was broken, and it is doubtful if he could have gone far even if he had been free. One heave and it was crashing back among the undergrowth that seemed on the point of breaking into a blaze.

Slim Jim raised the fallen man’s head in his arms.

‘Now I’ll hurt you, I’m afraid. Sing out when you can’t stand it any longer. Put your arm round my neck. That’s right. We haven’t a second to spare. I ain’t sure that we’ll get through now!’

‘Give me your pistol, man, and clear out,’ said the trooper.

Jim laughed grimly as he made a desperate effort to hoist the helpless man into the saddle.

‘None of that now,’ he said with an oath. ‘Nancy an’ me here, we’re riskin’ our lives to get you safe outer this, an’ you’ve got to do your part. They’ll be hangin’ me for murder else.’

It was no easy matter to get him into the saddle. He set his

teeth hard and gripped Slim Jim's shoulder with one hand, while with the other he caught the pommel of the saddle; but the mare started back in affright, and he fell and could not repress a groan. He began to feel faint and sick with pain now, but the laboured breathing of his companion served to help him to keep his senses. He could not, he must not, fail this man who had come to him in his direst need. If the trooper was nearly done for, the sweat was running down Slim Jim's face in little streams before he was seated swaying in the saddle.

Jim put his flask to his lips.

'Here, man, take a sip. It'll hearten you up.'

The sergeant drank and handed it back gratefully.

'Get up behind me, James Brock.'

Jim started. He had not heard his own name for many a long day.

'That's all right, sergeant,' he said. 'I'm goin' to lead the mare. She'll go best that way. She's pretty nigh lost her senses through fear, poor beast.'

What a ride it was! Jim caught the mare's headstall and raced along before the wind as hard as he could go. All the sick man behind him could do was to clutch at the saddle and hold on as well as he could. The fire was up with them, flying along through the tree-tops; it could not be long before the scrub below ignited, and then what would their lives be worth? Come on, good mare, come on. The smoke seemed stupefying him, weighing him down; could he, could he, keep on? He looked back ever and again at the swaying figure in the dim haze behind him; as long as he was there he *must* keep on—both their lives depended on him, and Maddy's life and happiness, too, it seemed. He felt a sharp stinging pain in his shoulder, and before he could lift a hand the man behind had stretched forward and extinguished the fire. Another—and that was out—and another. It could not last long. The trooper was not fit to do it; another and he would topple over and his labour would be all in vain, for he was done now and knew well enough he would never be able to put him in the saddle again once he fell out.

'Blast you!' he said angrily, as the sergeant very helplessly put out his shirt for the fourth time, 'can't you let a fellow burn if he wants to? You sit in the saddle, and be d——d to you!'

They were on the top of the rise now, and the air was a little clearer, and Slim Jim paused to try and get breath.

Behind them the hill seemed a very sea of fire, and it was stretching out wide arms of smoke and flame to encircle them.

'Sergeant,' said Slim Jim bitterly, 'I guess we're done. I don't see you're a crack better off than when I found you. I'm blamed if we can get out of this.'

The trooper put a heavy hand on his shoulder.

'A thousand times better off if we die now! A man named Robinson, one of Selby's shepherds, had a hut hereabouts. Could we reach it?'

'Where's the good? He's got a wife an' a kid——'

'There's a water-hole there,' gasped the sergeant.

'Right you are,' cried Jim cheerfully. He had actually forgotten all about that water-hole.

They turned off the broad track, and it was a wild scramble through the half-mile of scrub that lay between it and Robinson's clearing. Jim's heart sank more than once. It was a small point—suppose they missed it? Then, indeed, they might throw up their hands, for when this scrub caught, as catch it would in a very few minutes—it was alight already in several places—there would be no hope for them if they were in it.

And then, just as he was giving up hope, the sergeant bent over and gasped faintly, 'A little to the left, a little to the left,' and he turned the mare's head and saw they were on the edge of the clearing. Not before it was time, for the trooper had sunk down helpless to the ground.

It was such a tiny clearing, and the small house alongside a very shrunken water-hole was just dimly visible through the grey haze.

A man started up, and without a word helped Jim to carry his companion to the water.

'Put him in the water, it ain't too deep; my missus 'll do what she can for him. Help us save the shanty, mate.'

And they saved it.

It was a terrible, wearing, cruel fight, but at four o'clock that afternoon, when the rain came down in torrents, the little home was still safe; the trooper was delirious, and the weary woman, who had put her baby in a hole scooped in the ground and covered it with a wet sack while she worked with the men, turned and caught Jim's hand and kissed his face with a passion of weeping.

'You come straight from Heaven, I do b'lieve,' she sobbed, 'The good God sent you,' and the man wrung his hand,

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'You come straight from Heaven, I do b'lieve,' she sobbed, 'The good God sent you,' and the man wrung his hand,

'Mate, mate, I b'lieve the missis is right. I never could ha' done it alone.'

Jim broke into a hoarse burst of laughter. His eyes were nearly burnt out of his head, his hair was singed and his beard gone.

'D'ye know who I am?' he cried; 'when you do you won't say much for me. I'm Slim Jim, the bushranger. Now I must be off. Let 'em know at the camp, mate, about the sergeant, will you? an' don't let up on me for a bit. I want to cut an' start afresh. Do that for me, mate, will you? The sergeant, he won't be able to tell for a day or two.'

The other man wrung his hand again heartily.

'God be with you, Slim Jim!' called out the woman as he rode away through the desolate blackened country, through the pouring rain, and her blessing seemed to linger with him as he reached the cave and saw Maddy's anxious face looking out for him.

'We're goin' to start afresh, Maddy,' he said gently. 'We'll slip away across the hills to-morrow an' start afresh. I guess I've earned it.'

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It was January '98, the height of the cruel hot summer, and the fire was sweeping down through the long dry grass on to the homestead—the great homestead that was like a township, owned by Block and Sons.

Such a fight as they had for it, but the buildings and the garnered harvests were saved, and the old man and his stalwart sons and grandsons trooped into the big dining-hall, where grandma, with snow-white hair and bright, sparkling, roguish black eyes, waited for them at the head of the table.

'Twas the worst fire I've seen,' said her eldest son, throwing down his hat and mopping his hot face.

She looked across at her husband.

He smiled into her eyes kindly.

'Twasn't near so bad, Maddy, as the fire that give the sergeant such a narrow squeak for his life near Deadman's there, way back in the fifties.'

MARY GAUNT.

HUMOURS OF IRISH LIFE.

IRISH humour, like most things connected with that much-maligned country, has been worn so threadbare that it requires some courage to approach the subject. I venture to do so on the plea that the humour of Irish life is something quite distinct from the smart sayings made to order for the benefit of Saxon visitors, and therefore in this article I have carefully avoided all stock stories, no matter how good, and only give what we ourselves have met with in our daily life among the people. That strong contrasts exist between the two countries which lie so close together no one can deny, and a distinguished English ecclesiastic has recently alluded to Ireland as the country where everything is upside down. With regard to such an imputation we can only 'deny the allegation and despise the allegator;' but in many cases it must be allowed that the customs and associations of the two countries are poles apart, and what is dear and sacred to one is absolutely meaningless to the other. Take, for example, an English country churchyard, with its neatly kept grass, carefully tended graves, and delightful halo of Gray's 'Elegy;' then look at an Irish one. If you have courage to climb over the tumble-down tombstones and risk an encounter with the nettles and weeds, you will probably find yourself confronted by the bones of the 'rude forefathers' themselves, and, most likely, a ghastly memento in the shape of a skull or two. Yet even here a kind of grim humour creeps in. Once, on visiting such an enclosure, we noticed amid the grass and nettles, not indeed bones, but an imposing vault, the heavy iron door of which stood open. Inside were rows of coffins, ready for the inspection of any passing visitor, two-footed or four-footed. We drew the attention of the old grave-digger to the fact. 'Ah!' he said, 'shure that's Misther Tuohy's vault, an' he'll niver have the door shut; he likes thim within to have air. Ye see that,' he went on, pointing to an erection strongly resembling a pigsty, built against the ruined walls of the little chapel, 'there's two families in there, the Ruane above and the Murphys below; but, shure, they've got the floor between thim.' It seemed a novel kind of 'flat;' but, after all, there is nothing new under the sun.

From this subject one seems to pass naturally to that of sickness; and here humour flourishes. It is true that, with the spread of general knowledge and improved medical aid, 'cures' and superstitions are on the wane, but still 'the misthress's bottle' is much preferred to the doctor's, and the advice of a 'lucky woman' is of much higher value than that of an M.D. Apart from the medical knowledge required, it is no light matter to undertake to prescribe for yr's neighbours, as the following will show. 'If it's plazin' to yr honor, I'm come to ax for a bottle,' said an old woman. 'I was tuk that bad last night I thought the life 'ud lave me.' After due inquiry into her symptoms she was given a packet of arrowroot, with minute directions how to prepare it. As she scarcely seemed to take them in, a happy thought struck the lady. 'You know how to make starch, don't you?' she asked. 'Yes,' Biddy said, she did. 'Then make it just like that,' said her friend, 'and add a little sugar to it.' Biddy departed, to return next day with the information that 'she was like to die afther atin' what Miss Norah gave her, and, with all due respect to her, she couldn't get it all down, it wint so aginst her.' She was requested to bring what remained for inspection, which revealed that the directions as to starch had been literally carried out. She had put *blue* in it. This was more than equalled by an old man, who arrived one day with a long list of symptoms, including 'a tatherananty that rowled round and round in his inside.' Fortunately the 'misthress' was good at diagnosis, and he was presented with a powder tied up neatly in white paper. 'Here, Mike,' she said, 'don't mix this with anything, but take it quite plain, just as it is.' Mike promised and departed, to return rejoicing in a day or two. 'Glory be to God, the misthress's powder had cured him intirely, an', faith, he tuk ivery bit of it, barrin' that much of the sthring' (showing about an inch), 'that was that tough he couldn't get it down.'

There is one specially Irish characteristic which might well be borne in mind by those philanthropists and political prospectors who make Ireland their happy hunting-ground. I mean the universal desire to give satisfaction as well as information, and at all costs to suit our manners to our company. 'Shure it's as aisy to tell a lie as to tell the thruth' is a maxim we have never found any difficulty in acting up to. Indeed, it is in a great measure this fatal desire to agree quickly, not with our adversary, but our friend, and if possible to go one better, that lands us in so many quagmires. I once had occasion to denounce in strong

terms a particularly brutal agrarian outrage, in which several unfortunate animals had been shot at and mutilated. My hearer, a respectable kind-hearted young man, who would not willingly have injured a fly, thoroughly agreed with me. 'That's thrue,' he said; 'an' shure, if they were for killin' something, it would have been a dacent thing to have shot a man, and not two poor dumb bastes that couldn't defend themselves.' The most rigid upholder of the S.P.C.A. could hardly have gone further. Nowhere is the old proverb 'Manners makyth man' so firmly believed in, or acted upon, as in Ireland. Nothing stands to a man or carries him through difficulties like a good manner. 'Glory be to God that it's your honour's self that's come, and not that little black divil that was here last wake; ivery word he spake it was as if he hot ye in the face with a sod o' turf,' was the greeting received by a Government inspector whose colleague was not remarkable for his courtesy. Another admirable characteristic must not be overlooked. An Irishman is naturally devout, and as a rule accepts the decrees of Providence without a murmur. His climate is as changeable as he is himself, but you rarely hear him grumble. Anything short of a deluge is 'a grand day, glory be to God,' or, if he is completely wet through, 'a fine soft day for the country.' On one occasion, when it had rained incessantly for weeks, and the crops were almost under water, I said to a man, 'What do you think of the weather, Flannagan?' 'I think,' said Flannagan, looking round at the dripping hedges and soaking fields, 'I think, Miss, if I was to be makin' weather, an' made the likes of this, there'd be grumblin' at it.' It was wrung out of him, and surely disapprobation was never more delicately expressed. As might be expected, ours is a soil in which blessings and curses flourish in almost tropical luxuriance, and both are dispensed with a liberal hand. Among the causes which insure a plentiful supply of the former may be reckoned the possession of red hair. 'The ould masther's funeral was a grand sight,' said an old woman, 'but shure the grandest sight of all was to see Masther Andy standin' there with his head shinin' like gould in a bog dhrain. May the Lord bless him an' the barber that barberised him!' We are often credited with a disposition to accept statements without proof of their accuracy, but the following story goes far to disprove such an accusation. 'It's wishin' to inform the family I am that there's a cross baste beyant in the field,' was announced one morning by an old herd. 'Are you sure it's really cross?' some

one asked. 'Ah! begorra, I am shure; Mrs. Casey herself was walkin' across on her way from market, whin it wint at her an' turrened her upside down, and the crathure was that skeared she couldn't spake hardly a word whin she got home, an' himself wouldn't belave her, so he tuk Mary out to see if it was thrue, an' begorra it wint at her and turrened her upside down too, so thin he *knew* it was a cross baste.' The same old herd described his cattle. 'Shure, they're fine bastes now, but troth, if ye'd seen thim whin they came first, it's thin skilitons they were.' No paper on Irish humour would be complete without at least a few specimens of bulls. Here are two or three jotted down at random. 'Dhrunk!' said a man speaking of his neighbour, 'he was that dhrunk that he made ten halves of ivery word.' 'Arrah, Ma'am! have ye heard the news? Misther John's best calf's been dhrownded on him. Shure, I'm afther goin' through the field mesilf, whin they were gettin' the crathure out of the ditch, an' he was that wake he could hardly walk home.' 'But I thought you said he was drowned?' 'Dhrownded! And shure so he was dhrownded, but he wasn't dhrownded dead.'

'Was it a good fair to-day?' inquired a master. 'Ah, no, your honour. Shure it was only a little fair, and thim little fairs are niver big ones.'

'Why is the chapel bell ringing, Mike?' 'Shure, it's two men over there beyant in Gurtnaghur that's died, and they're a buryin' of one another to-day, and that's the sign.'

Among the many factors at work in Ireland there is one the extent of whose influence is supposed, both by friends and foes, to be almost unlimited. I mean what is called the power of the priest, and as it undoubtedly has a prominent place for good or evil in Irish life, the following example may be of interest.

Old Mike and his wife lived in a little cabin on the mountain, one of a type which is happily becoming every day more rare. The walls were of mud, and the floor of the same useful material, with a gutter running down the middle to divide the family apartment from that of the cow and ass, for Mike did not rise to the dignity of a 'harse baste.' To this mansion came his reverence one cold showery morning in March, to hold a station. His umbrella was wet and dripping, so, being a careful man, he placed it open in the space vacated by the animals, who were grazing outside. After the usual devotions, when the congregation had dispersed, he went for a stroll while Moira prepared his breakfast, for to entertain his reverence afterwards is the crowning honour of a station.

He had not gone far when a heavy shower obliged him to take shelter under a tree, and send a little gossoon running back for his umbrella. 'His riverence is afther sinding me to bring him his ombrell,' said the boy, bursting into the cabin. 'The saints pre-sarve us!' said Mike. 'Maybe it's the thing he left there beyant in the corner,' and seizing the umbrella he tried to pass it through the door, but the entrance was low and narrow and the umbrella large and wide. Without a moment's hesitation he caught up a spade and began shovelling down the wall at either side of the door. 'Man alive!' said the priest, appearing on the scene, 'what-ever are ye at?' 'Shure, its makin' way I am for yr riverence's ombrell,' said old Mike; 'divil a bit of it 'ill go through door at all, at all.' 'Ah, nonsense, man!' said his reverence, laughing; and stepping inside he took the umbrella out of Moira's hand and closed it before them. Old Mike stared at it aghast. Then he turned to his wife. 'Glory be to God, Moira,' he said; 'is there any-thing beyant the power of the priest?' These old people belonged to a generation which is fast passing away, and to which the suc-ceeding one bears but little resemblance. One of its last survivors was old Peggy, a well-known character, whose ancestors had come 'from the bottom of the top of the North in Cromwell's time.' Though over eighty, she footed it every Sunday to mass, a dis-tance of over four miles, and no one knew their religion better than she. The last blessing Peggy bestowed on me a few weeks be-fore her death is, I think, worth repeating. 'May the Lord grant ye a long life and a happy ind, and may ye be sporting in heaven with the King of Glory and His twelve Apostles!'

So much for the wild West. My last two examples hail from 'fair Dublin city.' No one at all acquainted with our shores can be unacquainted with our cars or their drivers, whose ready wit is proverbial. A man driven home by one of these on a very wet night wished to give him something to keep the cold out. Finding nothing at hand but a liqueur-stand with its tiny glasses, he poured him out one, saying, 'You'll think none the worse of this because it was made by the holy monks.' The carman drained the glass. 'God bless the holy monks,' he said; 'it's thim-selves that can make good liquor, but the man that blew that glass was very short of breath.' A few years ago, during some repairs to a Dublin thoroughfare, a tunnel was made under the roadway. 'How many of ye's is there down below?' shouted a man from above. 'Three,' came the answer. 'Then let the half of ye's come up,' said the man in the street.

A NEWSPAPER STOPGAP.

DISSATISFIED enough I was at having to spend the winter in the remote settlement of Glenbrae, even though the C.P.R. track passed only ten miles distant from the town limit, which was the name given to the 'fire-break' that encircled the scattered group of houses. Around spread a singularly uninteresting prairie, not a bush or tree to be seen, until you had driven a mile or so from the settlement.

The February of 1891 had been almost indescribably cold during its first days, and on the morning of the 14th, when I drove into Glenbrae, I reckoned by the numbness in feet and hands that the temperature was fairly low. The country through which I had just passed was the veritable home of the cold genius of the north. The chilly ball of the sun was encircled by solar *coronæ* and coloured rainbows innumerable; the air glittered with ice crystals, that flashed like millions of steel points caught by the sunlight; a bed of diamonds spread beneath the sharp runners of my cutter, while glazed frost hung upon tree trunks, and decorated each skeleton branch with a distinctive beauty. Along the clear blue expanse of the southern horizon hung a wondrous mirage, where I could gaze upon a deserted city of ice, with tall pinnacles shooting upward from silent streets of cloud.

Wrapped up in furs to the nose-tip, and bending to examine my thermometer, I recognised Snook, the crank of the settlement. Knowledge made him a person of much importance in his own eyes, though the world, as represented by Glenbrae, had hitherto refused to acknowledge his claims. No man, they argued, burdened with such a name could be the possessor of wisdom. So Snook had to pass through life handicapped by the only gift that his parents had bequeathed to him.

'How does she read?' I called, coming up behind.

'She was -52 a while back. Now she's at -43, and travelling up fast.'

'That's good.'

'Is it? Put your eyes 'way over north.'

I obeyed, and beheld a thin line of haze, something like a distant snow flurry, revolving as it ascended, and gradually lengthening and spreading.

'The thermometer is going up!' I exclaimed. 'She's at -40 now.'

'About -20 she'll fetch and stay,' said Snook. 'That'll make a cold enough blizzard, eh?'

'You bet,' I said, glad to be home again. 'Come inside, and put in the afternoon with me.'

He accepted readily, poor old chap, for his own home was not luxurious. 'What have you been working at this morning?' I asked, as we pulled our chairs to the stove.

The scientist tapped an empty pipe meaningly against his knee, and replied:

'Terrestrial magnetism, with the possibility of its use for telegraphic purposes.'

I took the hint, and threw him over a plug of tobacco. 'Rather deep, eh?' I ventured.

'To most—simple enough to me. I have made a careful study of it.'

'Well, let's hear,' I said, feeling I was in for some wild theory.

The scientist chopped an undue amount of tobacco, filled the pipe, then calmly placed the residue in his pocket. With an airy wave of the knife round his head he commenced:

'According to my observations, which may be taken as correct, the magnetic pole is at the present time making a course south of east from Melville Peninsula. Its immediate discovery would show what course it had taken since its primary disclosure, would determine at what rate it has journeyed, besides, of course, informing us as to its exact location.'

'But what would you do with it when found?'

'We could ascertain what the magnetic force is at the pole itself, as compared with other points at which similar observations have been made, also note if irregularities exist in the manifestation of this force in each twenty-four hours. Having discovered at what particular point, or points, of the 360 degrees that form the circle of observation these irregularities showed themselves, we might easily understand the course of the daily variation of the compass.'

'But where does the telegraphy come in?' I asked.

'With this discovery. Don't you see, Talbot, that we could make fresh observations and test the truth of the theory, which lays it down as an axiom that terrestrial magnetism is an element

that may be safely used for telegraphic purposes? Think what such a discovery would mean to the nation that had definitely located the two magnetic poles of this earth! That nation would possess points at which to receive, and from which to despatch, messages along its magnetic meridians to any part of the world. She would possess a framework of telegraphic wire which could not be tampered with, still less cut by any hostile outsiders.'

I was about to reply, by way of raising an argument, when a mighty gust of wind struck the side of the house. We went to the door, for nothing could be distinguished from the frozen-in windows. The blizzard had fairly started. Already sun and sky had disappeared, while the shanty opposite mine was an indistinct shadow. Fine snow-dust was whirling on all sides, while ice crystals cut the face like whipcord. I scraped away the snow that had already gathered over the thermometer, and read -21 . Snook had been correct. Not a living creature could be seen, though I heard the frightened bellowings of oxen in a neighbouring stable.

Hardly had we got back into the warm when the wind rose to such a pitch that my small house rocked, while snow-dust forced its passage through the double windows, and lay unmelting upon the ledge inside. The shrieks and moans of the storm, the weird rushing of the snow clouds, were of themselves sufficient to make the boldest tremble.

So Snook declared he must 'go and search for his shanty.' I accompanied him to the storm-door. He began to wind a thick muffler round mouth and chin, but in the middle of the operation he stopped and turned a startled face to mine. 'There's some one razzling against the door.'

The next moment we had it open, admitting pandemonium. It was not then five o'clock, yet outside it was night, a raging, infuriate night, that no pen can describe. We seemed to be standing on an oasis, around which whirled space, a freezing, blasting vortex, whose breath meant death.

'Have you got him?' howled Snook, plunging from the niagara of wind.

A gaunt frost-coated figure fell inside and along the floor. We closed the door with numbed hands.

'It's Arcand, Talbot. You know him. He lives five miles west on the Fairford trail.'

The man was gasping for breath and rolling from side to side.

My house was the first in Glenbrae, entering the settlement from the west. Arcand had reached the door, then fallen exhausted.

I gave him a dram, and presently he crawled up on his knees, to gasp feebly forth the monosyllable, 'Help!'

'You're safe enough now,' I said, for I thought his brain was wandering.

'Not for me—Widow Baker and her daughter.'

Bit by bit we got the story—a common one, alas! on the winter plains. Shortly before the blizzard commenced, the stove in Mrs. Baker's little shanty had overturned. The old woman and her daughter were splitting kindling in the shed outside, when they suddenly caught sight of flames darting through the door. They rushed to the shack, but could do nothing. The fire was too far advanced, so the few shovelfuls of snow they could cast upon the flames had but slight effect. While they were watching the destruction of their poor home, Arcand came up on snowshoes. He had been making for home, but, having marked sure signs of an approaching blizzard, turned towards the widow's shanty, to seek that shelter which on the prairie is never denied. At once he put them in the shed, wrapped them up as best he could, then sped along towards the nearest city of refuge—Glenbrae. But he had scarcely travelled over half the distance when the ice-storm struck him, and he had been compelled to fight his way blindly along through that fearful and impermeable night. For the last two or three hundred yards he had crawled upon hands and knees, after having unlashed the snowshoes from his hopelessly frozen feet.

'See here,' I said to Snook, 'you're muffled. Get round to the bar-room and tell this to the other boys.'

'I'm off,' he said quietly. But who would be willing to venture two miles across prairie on such a night?

Then I tried to raise Arcand from the floor. 'Don't take the bother, Mr. Talbot,' he said; 'I'm done for.'

'No, you're not,' I said hopefully; 'I'm going to take you round to the back room, and stick your feet in a pail of ice.'

'It's too late; they're gone. You can't think what it is when I move my legs. Two dead lumps of stone, that once were feet drag at the end of them.'

'Perhaps they're not quite dead,' I said.

'Yes, they are. O Lord! O Lord! Say, Mr. Talbot, help me along to the stove. I want to feel a good heat again after that eternal freezing.'

'But your feet?'

'I tell you they're gone. I'm as helpless a cripple as ever hobbled.'

'But the mortification will spread and kill you.'

'I'll take care it don't,' he said, with a smile of pain. 'You drag me along to the stove—make it red hot; I'll fix the mortification.'

I did as he wished, and piled tamarac and poplar logs within the stove. He lay motionless, only groaning softly now and again.

'Got a small handsaw, Mr. Talbot?' Arcand asked the strange question so abruptly that I started.

'Yes,' I replied, then, without thinking much on what I was doing, went for the article.

'Thanks,' he muttered grimly, as I handed it him; 'if you don't fancy surgery, perhaps you'd best look another way.'

'I don't think I took in the meaning of what he said, not even when he removed arctic socks and mocassins, and exposed to view two waxlike feet. I never could stand looking upon frozen human flesh, so I crossed to the window, where I could feel the snow-dust beating on my hands, and listened to the mad revelry of the ice king.

A harsh sound broke out behind, strongly suggestive of a butcher sawing meat. I turned quickly to behold a most unnatural sight. Arcand was sitting upon the floor, gravely sawing off his right foot just above the ankle.

I gave a sort of cry, and he looked round with a horrible grin. 'This'll fix the mortification, eh? No good paying doctors when you can do the job for yourself. My feet are under chloroform—you might say.'

He went on sawing, until the foot dropped off and fell in a ghastly manner upon the floor. He took it up, handled it, then coolly threw it into a corner. After this he commenced to remove the left foot, while I looked on, dreadfully fascinated, though the sight made me feel sick. Suddenly the dull scraping ceased, and he gave a loud scream. His whole body quivered, while his face went white and drawn. 'I cut through a tendon, or something, that wasn't dead,' he panted; 'I tell you it hurt like h—l.'

There came a furious banging against the door, and I hurried out, while Arcand fell stolidly again to his sawing.

Snook burst into the house in the midst of a whirlwind.

'Two of the boys are going ! They're hitching up now.'

'Who?' I cried.

'Alf Rogers, old Jake's eldest son, and Joe Whiting, of the flour and feed store.'

'Did they offer?'

'Course. When I told them in the bar-room, all the boys were ready, married and all; but when it came down to choosing, young Rogers spoke out: "See here, boys, I'm going for one. My mother's got the old man, with three sons besides me. So if I get iced over it'll come kind of easier to her than if I was the only one. Fellows that have got wives must stand out of this racket." Then up stepped Joe Whiting and said: "None of you boys know the prairie better than me, though I'm only a youngster. So I guess I'll put into this business, along with Alf here. There's none depending on me, neither man nor woman, so I'm the right man."

'Are they going together?' I asked, the blood tingling through my veins.

'No, they might get lost together; one horse would stick close to the other. Alf is giving Joe quarter of an hour start. I guess he'll have gone by this time. Where's Arcand?'

'Inside—cutting his feet off.'

You couldn't surprise Snook.

'You don't say! He should have asked me to do it for him. I could have taken them off scientifically.'

We went back to the inner room. I had advised the philosopher to stay the night, and dig his shanty out in the morning. There we found Arcand, binding up his stumps. Snook at once volunteered to perform the bandaging.

'Get rid of those things first,' I said, pointing to the two livid shapes in the corner.

Snook laughed loudly, gathered up the objects fearlessly, and carried them from the room.

I couldn't take my thoughts from Whiting, struggling through the blizzard, and Rogers preparing to follow him. It always seems to me far more daring a thing to brave the powers of nature than to contend against human might. The latter you can in a manner understand, and fight against with equal weapons; with the former you must strive greatly handicapped by ignorance.

During the next hour the storm dropped a little, I fancy;

the temperature went up to -18 , and this fact afforded a certain sense of relief. Wrapped in my furs, I walked up and down the passage leading from the inner door to the sitting-room, while a voice constantly reproached me: 'You should have gone,' it said. 'You can bear cold better than most men. Besides, you have the best jumper in the neighbourhood, and the cleverest horse in the country. The wind is lessening a little now, and you might be able to help.'

I returned to the room, where Snook was treating Arcand to a discussion upon surgery, a subject about which he knew just as much as his listener. He stopped as I entered, and asked, 'What's the rig up for, Talbot? Going for a stroll?'

'Thinking of it,' I said shortly.

'Tired of life? Kind of hankering after suicide? That the sort of idea?'

'The idea is to help those two fellows, if it's possible. I shan't go far—just drive round the outskirts of the place, and see if I can pick up any one.'

'Don't you do it, Mr. Talbot,' cried Arcand. 'We don't want to see you crawling in, and chopping your feet off, same as me. You can't do any good.'

'You take good advice, and stop inside,' added the philosopher.

Of course, opposition only strengthened determination. I made for the door. Snook followed, when he saw that my mind was made up, and asked, 'Shall I come with you, Talbot?'

I refused, for I understood that the proposal was purely formal, but suggested that he should join me in the stable, and give me a hand in hitching up.

While he was muffling, I started for the stable, which was placed immediately behind the house. I felt my way along the fence, staggering beneath the fury of the storm, and reached the log-built erection after climbing a great wall-like drift. My Kitty knew me before I lit the lantern, and whinnied softly with pleasure. I slipped into her stall, stroked her cold neck, which glistened with diamond-like crystals, and rubbed the sharp icicles from her nostrils. Early in the afternoon I had covered her with a couple of thick blankets, for the old lady was fifteen, so required careful attention. I hadn't the heart to take her out on such a night, so turned into the other stall, where stood her three-year-old son, a youngster only half broken, but with abun-

dance of superfluous spirits, which I reckoned would stand me in good stead. I pulled the harness from its peg, but the rattling attracted Kitty, who looked round to see what I was doing. Then, when she discovered that I was about to take her brainless offspring in preference to herself, she snorted indignantly.

'It's only to spare you, my girl,' I said. But, even as I spoke, she raised her fine old head, and fixed her large eyes on me. And I could read those eyes like a book.

'Do you mean to say that you are going to venture out to-night with that young fool—who is only half trained, who has no knowledge of the prairie? Can you really consider that colt more to be depended upon than your faithful old mare?'

'You're right, Kitty,' I said, just as though she had actually spoken.

My life has often hung on a hair, but never upon so fragile a one as then. Had I taken the colt, had Kitty not made her appeal, this record of the great blizzard would never have been written by my hand, for I should have gone to swell the number—a large and melancholy one it was—of those who perished beneath the blasting breath of the Arctic King that night.

Kitty whinnied joyfully, and rubbed her nose repeatedly against my shoulder when I threw the harness over her blanket. And there are those who declare that the horse, second only to man in the scale of creation, and not always inferior, does not possess the gift of reasoning!

Snook came tumbling into the stable to give me his assistance. Then we faced the storm again. A few minutes later I held the reins, Kitty was chafing to be off, while the philosopher leaned over the jumper, tucking me in securely.

'Are you right, Talbot?' he shouted, placing his mouth near my ear.

'Yes,' I shouted back.

'Good-bye; I'm sorry to lose you. But I shall be at the funeral!'

With this encouragement ringing in my ears, I was off, scraping over the heaving surface, and heading due west.

I was well muffled, wearing over my ordinary winter garments a buffalo, with storm collar nearly a foot in height. This coat was held in place by a woollen sash wound several times round my body. I lay almost flat in the jumper upon a thick bed of

straw covered over with a heavy rug. Stretched across legs and body I had, first, a great cowhide, then a valuable buffalo robe. A thick pair of otter-driving mitts, covering others of wool, protected my hands.

We were travelling dead against the aerial avalanche. After the first minutes I closed my eyes, for the wind seared them like red-hot iron, and it was intolerable to gaze into the maelstrom that whirled, twisted, and shrieked around, writhing into shapes which held forth ghostly arms and cried aloud for joy at the sight of victims. I was guiding Kitty entirely by instinct, as it was impossible to even see her. I might have been in the next district of Athabasca, hundreds of miles away, for all I could determine by surroundings.

I suppose a little more than a quarter of an hour had passed when the fright gained possession of me. Where would that journey end? What power had I against nature? What would happen to me? Such questions as these dinned into my brain, and made me light-headed. Then I thought of Rogers, fighting the elements at perhaps no great distance; of Whiting, who might have reached the shanty, or been already frozen to —. But no; I couldn't think of that.

A wailing sound came floating through the liquid stream of ice, and I recognised the bayings of wolves. The jumper moved slowly onward, bumping up and down fiercely. Suddenly I opened my eyes, with a stifled gasp of fright, for I imagined that something was leaning over, with great hands outreached to strangle me. No—nothing; only the whirling grey stream of snow, above, below, on the right, the left, winding around me like death robes, then passing with a shriek, taunting my puny effort with invisible mouths, sweeping together from all points of the compass, uniting and interlacing, then unwreathing with ghastly cries and groans, to finally sweep off once again, and make room for other phantoms. Presently my excited fancy made me believe I saw luminous balls revolving in the thick of the ice clouds, phosphorescent masses that advanced menacingly towards me with huge hollow eyes and frightful jaws, then retreated, lessening gradually, to disappear within the vortex, while others yet more hideous took their place. I thought of weird Indian legends, which I had laughed at when the sun was shining and companions had surrounded me. Now these came back in all their unnatural horror.

'Kitty!' I screamed, while the fiends yelled louder to drown the weak sound of my voice, 'take me back.'

She plodded on, while I continued to cry at her like a madman. Still she absolutely refused to turn; and then it came to me, for the first time, that I had not the faintest idea in which direction Glenbrae lay.

So my time had come! After that night I should be a missing man. Well, it was an easy death—just a falling to sleep, with no awakening; not, at least, in this world. Already I felt the drowsiness stealing over me, that first numbness which must be combated or —

Ah! Kitty had stopped.

Whatever the cause, it meant temporary salvation. I cast off the sleep of death. I brushed away the icicles that clung to my eyebrows, and vainly strained my eyes to pierce the driving whirlwind that always swept down upon me like an avalanche. However, she did not remain motionless for long. She turned off sharply, almost at a right angle, and again fought along, having the wind now on the left. This sudden stoppage and abrupt continuation of a journey which had no definite object worked a wonderful change in me. For one thing it was a great relief having the wind at the side instead of facing it. Then the mare's conduct led me to believe that some shanty was near at hand. Perhaps she was returning home. Perhaps her keen eyes had caught sight of some dim object. Hope will drag a man pretty well out of his grave, and in my case it assuredly saved me from dropping into that fatal stupor which spelt out an end to all things.

Also I felt certain that we were dragging over unbroken prairie. The rises and sudden dips told me this, as well as the presence of saskatoon and kanikanik bushes that scratched against the side of the jumper and grew thicker as we advanced.

It was not long before Kitty stopped again, and this time for fully two minutes. Then she plunged on, while I could sometimes hear her deep breathing, and knew she was growing distressed. I was continually calling to her, though she could not have heard me. Still, speech in a manner diverted my thoughts from unpleasant subjects, of which the vision of Snook, dressed in his shabby black, and following a coffin with an inscription terribly familiar, was the most persistent.

Then Kitty pulled up suddenly, at the side of a bluff, I think,

for I noticed that the force of the wind was much broken. As I strained my ears to listen, and my eyes to see, I fancied I heard her sniffing, and presently I was sure she whinnied. Then I became all excitement, for I knew she was speaking to me.

Again she called, and from the sound I should judge she must have turned her head to see if I was still alive. This settled me, for it was quite evident that she did require my help. Perhaps the rubber bit was hurting her, perhaps the harness was slipping; anyway, it was my duty to see what she wanted. So, trembling with the awful cold, and nervous as the child who crawls from his bed at dead of night, I fell from the jumper, and immediately stumbled across a large bundle half buried in the snow-dust.

It was a woman, totally insensible, but completely enveloped in furs and a thick cowhide from face to feet.

Somehow I dragged her to the side of the jumper, rolled her inside, as though she had been a sack of wheat, then found my way to the old mare's head. I was weak and very strange. My arms and legs hung to my body like weighty encumbrances. Even had there been no storm, I could not have walked straight, and I felt it was more than lucky that I had strength left to rescue the woman from her snow grave. If we could not reach Glenbrae before another hour had expired, I knew that Kitty would be dragging after her, if her strength held so long, nothing but a couple of frozen corpses.

'Kitty, my girl,' I cried, my face against her ice-covered neck, 'we look to you to save us.'

She fondled her head against my arm, and I bent to kiss her nose. Then I stumbled back to the jumper, tied the reins to the front rail, lay down, shuddering with cold and fright, and waited for the end. Kitty remained motionless for over a minute, then turned off and made towards the left, dragging us over ice hills and drifts, through the raging elements which never for a moment rested from their fury. Who the woman was I could form no idea, for her face was completely covered; had it not been, I could never have seen her features through that white darkness.

We dragged along for another quarter of an hour, I suppose; then I felt that my senses were weakening, that stiffness was settling into each limb. My head rolled on my shoulder in extreme weariness; my limbs were mere inanimate appendages; a pricking sensation tortured face and neck—I was succumbing.

Then, with a mighty effort, I cast off that stupor; and only those who may have gone through a like experience can tell what a supreme struggle is thus entailed upon the body. I could not die alone in the ice-clad winds. I must make one frantic effort for that life, which is never so dear as when the pale shadow of death falls across our track; one more effort to reach safety with the woman, who might, after all, have stood a better chance buried as I had discovered her.

With a final flicker of strength, the foolish strength of desperation, the mad strength of terror, I grasped at the reins, and pulled Kitty to the opposite direction. She struggled violently to free herself. We were going away from home. I felt sure of it, and was certain that I knew the right direction. I scarcely knew what I was doing, for I was half wild at the thought of death, and some fiend made me believe that Kitty was betraying me, that she was dragging me away from Glenbrae, out to the open plains, that I might perish.

This effort could not last—it was well for me that it could not. The reins dropped, and though I tried repeatedly to regain them, my hands had not the power. Kitty felt herself free, and again stopped, turning, so I imagined, to glance at me reproachfully. Then I became conscious that she was pawing up the snow and sniffing at the ground. After she had satisfied herself, she went on a few paces, then repeated the process. I had thrown her off her bearings, so now she was striving to regain them. After much of such manoeuvring, she settled upon her course, and started patiently to follow it, while I lay back with frost-sealed eyes that saw only the whirling mists, and deadened ears that heard only faintly the wild clamourings. I was past interfering now, as I was beyond aiding myself. I could not have dragged myself from the jumper, for I was frozen into one settled posture, and held down by an unseen hand, against which no power of humanity may struggle.

I can remember little of what followed, though I don't think I ever became entirely unconscious, which goes far to prove the truth of my boast, that I could stand cold better than most men. Everything came to me rather in the light of a curious dream. I lay there as if drugged, powerless to move, insensible to suffering, yet dimly conscious that certain events were taking place, events in which I was painfully interested, yet in which I could take no active part.

In this semi-sleeping state I recognised that we plunged through the turmoil of snow for an indefinite period. I believe we stopped occasionally, while Kitty examined the ground and took her bearings. I took no interest when we brushed past a white post, very much like the one that marked the outskirts of the Glenbrae settlement. Lastly, I was conscious of a final stoppage before a black mass that towered away towards the sky, while Kitty commenced to whinny and scrape her hoofs against some hard substance which gave forth a hollow sound. I took a mild interest, though I wondered at her astonishing energy. But when the dark substance suddenly yielded, and a flood of yellow light burst through the driving snow, I understood that I was about to enter another world, and began to feel more concerned.

The next instant I was seized by strong hands, and hauled from the jumper, a stiff helpless mass. Then I quickly changed my ideas. I had fallen into the hands of brigands, who would first rob and then probably kill me. Well, it was evil fortune, but really it didn't matter very much, if they were only quick about it. I tried to say something about a revolver in preference to a knife, but my captors refused to listen—perhaps I didn't speak after all. They dragged me into a strange place, which was very different from the world I had grown accustomed to, for there were no curious sensations beating against my face, there was no furious tumult rushing around me.

I felt something tickling my throat. I gave a few stifling gasps, then life came back again. I beheld an anxious face, which reminded me of Snook, bending over, while a voice, also recalling the same individual, observed cheerfully, 'Well, I guess the funeral's postponed after all.'

Presently I heard another far-away voice. 'Is he frozen any?'

The tones, humming close to my head, made out the answer. 'Don't think it. He's hard as rocks, and stands the cold like a bear.'

'No more use for the handsaw then,' said the distant voice.

Then I became conscious, and found myself in my own house, with Snook kneeling beside, and Arcand upon the lounge.

'Kitty,' I ejaculated.

'She's outside. Had to look after you first.'

'But the woman?'

‘What woman?’

‘In the jumper—under the robe.’ Then Snook disappeared like a flash.

A couple of minutes later he reappeared, bearing the bundle. He removed the cowhide, unwound a thick muffler from the face, then cried out, ‘Why, it’s Mary Baker! You’ve been the one to save her, after all, Talbot.’

‘Kitty did it. Go and see after her.’

‘Wait till I’ve revived the girl, anyhow.’

‘Take her to Arcand—give him the bottle. Go and mind Kitty. Man, where do you think I’d have been now, if it hadn’t been for her?’

Snook did as he was told. Then I lay back, and began to endure the pain of blood commencing to circulate.

‘The gal’s all right,’ said Arcand presently. ‘See how the colour’s coming back to her face. She was so well muffled, she couldn’t have frozen for a long time. I did that. Darn it, I saved her, and let myself go rotten.’

‘Heard anything about the other boys?’ I asked, as I writhed upon the floor in my pain.

‘Rogers is dead.’

‘Who found him?’

‘Nobody. Got back by himself. Snook went round to the bar-room, to find out if they’d heard anything, and while he was there the horse pulled up at the door. The boys dragged Alf out, and thought he was dead, for he was frozen up all over. But when they put him down, he opened his eyes, and saw old man Jake hanging over him, anxious like. Then he sort o’ smiled, though he was glad to see him again. “How did you do it, Alf? How did you manage to get home again, boy?” said the old man, with a voice broken like. Then Alf gathered all his strength, and answered in a voice every one in the place could hear—“God Almighty and the horse.” Then he tumbled back in his father’s arms and died. Old Jake took it terrible bad, Snook says. You see Alf was his eldest son.’

So Rogers returned to die, but young Whiting disappeared. The blizzard grew worse towards morning, raged throughout the following day, and a greater part of the night, then dropped as suddenly as it had arisen.

In that strange cold silence of the sun-rising a party of Glenbrae settlers set forth over the mountain-like drifts to make

the customary exploration of the prairie. In one of the nearest bluffs they discovered the horse, still attached to the jumper, but no traces of a frozen human body could be found. As the searching party were coming from this bluff, the leaders were startled by the sight of the waxwork figure of a boy, huddled up against the trunk of a white poplar, arms clasped round his knees, head leaning forward on his hands, to all appearances fast asleep. But on approaching, they found that he was frozen into a solid block of marble. This was not Whiting, but the son of a neighbouring farmer, and it subsequently transpired that he had gone out in the morning to follow up a wolf track. Then the blizzard must have caught him; he had lost his way, wandered into the bluff, sunk down exhausted, then speedily fallen into that painless sleep which leads to death. Many another ghastly and statuesque figure was thus discovered—old men and women, young men and girls. I should be afraid to say how many tragical deaths came to my knowledge, while there must have been many I never heard of. Old Mrs. Baker was found completely snowed over in the shed, bent quite double, and turned into stone. Her daughter entirely recovered, and was none the worse for her dreadful adventure.

And my Kitty, who had saved two lives? She was never the same after that night. Her wonderful intelligence was just as good as ever, but her strength and nerve were gone. Now she lies buried in a quiet bluff, where the white sand flows into Quill Lake, and none know the grave, except him who made it in sorrow for the loss of a true and faithful friend.

I believe in my Bible, I hope; still there is one verse I should much like to expunge: 'A horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.' I suppose the 'deliver' is used in a spiritual sense, yet I cannot forget that Kitty did for me that night what the wisest man on earth, had he been in her place, would have failed to accomplish.

Arcand died. He had neglected to remove all the dead flesh, therefore mortification spread. We took him to the hospital, where they amputated both legs, but it was too late. After all he had suffered, I think he deserved to pull through.

Perhaps I may be allowed to quote the readings of the meteorological instruments for that day, February 15, 1891. Barometer (reduced to sea level) 29.654 (lowest reading); temperature (maximum) —17.3 (minimum) —52.4 (Fahr.) Average

during the blizzard — 19·5. Greatest velocity of wind 37 miles (with an average freezing power of 51·5°).

Late in the summer of 1893, a farmer was travelling along the trail which leads west from Glenbrae. His wagon was drawn by a team of young oxen, and any one who understands these creatures will not be surprised to hear that, when about to pass a certain bluff, they suddenly rushed off the trail, and plunged through the scrub of an adjacent slough, which at that season of the year was of course dry. The farmer, after discussing the position with the obdurate beasts in western vernacular, decided to take the easiest course and drive straight through the slough. But, when halfway across, he saw a dreadful object, which closely resembled a human skull, protruding from the rank grass. Climbing down, he discovered a perfect skeleton, resting upon its back, and grinning up into his face. The 'hayseed' unconcernedly bundled the heap of bones into the wagon-box, drove home, and informed the neighbours of his discovery. From certain articles found near the remains the inhabitants were enabled to identify the skeleton. It was all that was left of poor young Whiting.

But about a month after the terrible thirty-six hours, during which so many good lives were lost, and so much silent suffering took place, the mail brought me my usual budget of English papers. In the evening I settled down comfortably, with pipe in mouth, to learn the home news. I waded through fashionable marriages, and the transit of people of note from one place to another. There were columns devoted to political wrangling, while there was not a little vapouring over a certain religious subject. In one periodical, at the end of a column devoted to latest fashions, were a few items inserted, not so much for interest as to fill up space to the end of the sheet. I was just reflecting that the papers must be terribly put to it for news, if they could fill up their columns with such vapid stuff, when these unimportant stopgaps caught my eye. The last two ran thus:

'Mr. John S——, of B——, states that a pig, nearly eighteen months old, which had been bred by him, was killed last week, and scaled no less than 33 score 9 lbs.

'It is reported that a somewhat severe "blizzard" occurred over the north-westerly prairies of the Dominion of Canada on or about February 15 last.'

ERNEST G. HENHAM.

THE WAYS OF A MILITARY HOSPITAL.

ALTHOUGH Rudyard Kipling has described almost every aspect of a soldier's life in India, he does not seem to have paid much attention to one phase of Thomas Atkins's life, which often forms no inconsiderable portion of his Indian service. Shall we say, which constitutes one of his pleasures? For illness is only one of the causes which lead a soldier, in his own jargon, to "go sick." Other and much more potent reasons for entering hospital are the approach of a heavy field day and impending route march, an inspection, or, more deadly in its results than almost any of these, two church-parades in one week—*e.g.* Good Friday and Easter Day. Once safe in the haven of hospital, Thomas enjoys what he describes as a 'soft billet.' His devices to secure a continuance of such joys are legion, and it must be owned that success often crowns his efforts.

The position of hospital orderly, though not such an easy one as that of the patient, is also not to be despised. The hours off duty are many, and the work by no means hard. The orderly is supposed to undergo a course of training; one of his duties is to write accurate reports. These begin in a crude and elementary form. A night report on a serious case which demanded hourly attention ran thus: 'Patient were of no trubbel.' (As an amendment to this report, 'Nurse and patient slept well' was suggested.)

Another on an unpopular sergeant was brief: 'Jackson is a confounded newsance.'

More advanced specimens are these: 'Saunders 'ad is nurrishment reglar, he also 'ad bleeding from the nose.' 'O'Flanagan were very restless and would not sleep without I sot beside 'im and took milk reglar.' But why wonder at these efforts of ignorant orderlies, when medical students have been known to write notes thus: 'The house surgeon dressed the wound looking red and angry;' or, 'Patient complains of severe headache, but has no children.'

A class of orderlies had been carefully instructed by a medical officer on the subject of enteric fever. The instruction was rather

over their heads, and much time was wasted in trying to explain the origin of enteric from a specific germ. On going over the subject the following week, the class was asked 'What did you learn about germs?' No answer. 'Well, what are germs?' Much scratching of well-oiled heads, and solemn silence. 'Come now, what *are* germs?' Answer, 'Them things wot you ketches wen you gits to bed at night.'

An orderly who came up for training announced himself as a person of much experience. 'Ah've seen a deal of sickness in my time. You see Ah nursed me father a matter o' seven years—'ee 'ad a ferocious liver.' (? Cirrhosis of liver.)

The orderly is not without his ideals and his ambitions. 'W'en I leaves the army and gits 'ome, I'm a-going to set up in the medical line.' 'Why, are you going to be a doctor?' 'No, not that, but the *nixt* thing to it (!) I'm a-going to 'ave a little shop in the pills and ointment line, and I'd make a rare good thing out of it if it wasn't for these yere alchemists wot picks to pieces all a pore chap sells.' Unfortunately, this man did not live to open the little shop of his dreams, for he was killed whilst serving with the Tirah Field Force.

It must not be supposed that an orderly's interests are confined to purely military or hospital subjects. His views on social matters are well defined. A man expressed great dislike to a certain station, and, when asked why, gave his reasons thus: 'You see, the young ladies 'ere is very onpleasant, and that 'aughty. I went up to a young lady at one of our sergeants' dawnees, and I asked 'er very nice would she 'ave a turn? "Ho no," she says, that nawsty-like, "*Hi* don't dawnee with none but sergeants!"'

The same man sustained a severe disappointment in his matrimonial projects. 'W'en B Company was givin' their dawnee I seen a young lady and 'er mother, wot I'd fancied for some time. So I went up to the old lady, and I arsked 'er to come and 'ave a drink, and I took an' give 'er a *very* stiff w'isky. Then I says to 'er, "I don't dislike," I says, "not the looks of yer daughter. May I see 'er 'ome to-night?" The old girl looks at me, and she says very solemn-like, "Young man," she says, "wot is your liabilities?" An' I says, "Well," I says, "I bear a very good character and I might be a sergeant some day!" "Young man," she says, "them things is no use. 'Ow much 'ave you got in the savings bank?" "Well," I says, "I've a matter of thirty or forty rewpees." "Ho no," says she, "onless you can put down an 'undred rewpees, you

don't 'ave nothink to say to me daughter, and you don't see 'er 'ome to-night." So the unhappy *soupirant's* plans were rudely nipped in the bud, and he was left lamenting.

The modern Mrs. Thomas Atkins has never, so far as I am aware, received much attention from any writer. The soldier's wife of a bygone age has been well described, but the nineteenth century barrack lady, whose prevailing feature is gentility, has yet to be portrayed. She comes to visit her husband in hospital with more or less regularity. One good lady was not allowed to come for the following reasons:—

Sister: 'I have got you a pass to come and see your husband on visiting day, Mrs. Hall.'

Mrs. H.: 'Thank you kindly, Miss, but 'All 'ee won't let me come, not hinside the 'orsepittle.'

Sister (with dignity): 'I assure you, Mrs. Hall, in *my* wards you will hear nothing to object to.'

Mrs. H. (pitilyngly): 'Lor' bless you, Miss, it ain't the langwidge, it's 'All, 'ee's that *jealous*, 'ee's afraid as I'd git torking to any of the other men. Don't you never marry, Miss; you Sisters 'as much the best of it. If you was to git 'old of a chap like 'All, w'y, 'ee'd make yer life a fair 'ell.'

In due time Hall, who was suffering from the effects of alcohol, was discharged from hospital, but he did not mend his ways, and was described by a sympathetic friend of his wife's as a 'proper beast.' The injured lady had much to say on the subject. 'All 'ee come 'ome *very* late from the sergeant's mess, w're 'ee'd bin drinking up the money as I oughter 'ave 'ad to keep the 'ouse. An' I says to 'im, quite nice, "Is that you, dear?" An' he says to me, that nawsty, "Was you expectin' of annybody else?" 'ee says.'

But Hall went to the front, was wounded, and was there and then invested with a halo of virtue by his anxious wife. All his previous faults were condoned and forgotten. He was referred to as 'a rare good 'usband w'en 'ee ain't in liquor.' His faithful wife's nights were disturbed by apparitions of her absent lord, and she was convinced that her *caro sposo* was no more. 'I seen 'im lawst night, Miss, plain as I sees yer this minnit, a-settin' on that there box, an' 'ee says to me, "Hemmer, w're's me trousers?" 'ee says, that natural-like! I know 'ee's gorn, Miss. I feels as 'ee's in 'Eving.'

Why the apparition of a gentleman asking such an unromantic

question should presage his death, would puzzle the Psychological Research Society to explain.

But the erring Hall lived in spite of all omens. He beguiled his convalescence by writing numerous letters to his wife, all of which were duly read aloud by the lady to a circle of admiring friends. 'I'd a reel bewtiful letter from 'All this morning, 'ee do write very nice, does 'All.' We hung expectantly on the lady's lips, awaiting these sentiments. She gave us the following *résumé*: 'Ee says, "W'en you're comin' up the line," 'ee says, "for to jine me, don't you git eatin' none o' them native beas'linesses, sweets, and fruit, and sich like. If you do," 'ee says, "you'll be dead safe to get the cholerer." 'Ee do think a lot abaout us, don't 'ee?' said the admiring wife.

Gratified by our appreciation, she also read us a few extracts from a letter received from 'All's mother, 'as were a dear ole lady.' "Don't you fret," she says, "not abaout 'Arry a-losin' 'is leg. It ain't as if 'ee'd lorst it arter some pot-'ouse row. Losin' 'is leg like that," she says, "a-fightin' for 'is country is a honner. Good-bye, my dear; God bless you both, and bring you safe 'ome to England!"

CONFERENCES ON BOOKS AND MEN.

X.

THE NEW CRITICISM.

Now the New Year reviving old desires,
The thoughtful soul to solitude retires.

ONE charm of the New Year is that it brings the new books. Few people, notwithstanding a literary affectation to the contrary, are really so coxcombical as to prefer old books when new are to be had. There is a gusto, an enthusiasm, with which the mind throws itself upon the new work that the old, however reverently esteemed, cannot inspire. Even shadows of the good things to come, the advertisements which form the best reading in the gazettes the few weeks before Christmas, are apt to take the taste out of the second-hand catalogues. There lies before me Mr. Starkey's list of announcements for the year of grace 1671, in which I read :

Paradise Regain'd, a Poem in four books, to which is added *Samson Agonistes*. The Author, John Milton, price bound 2s. 6d.

Will any one contend that if at this moment, in exchange for my half-crown, the large and well-printed octavo lay crisp and clean before me, my feelings would be no livelier, if less devout, than when I take it now from its sacred tabernacle? Well, the life-blood of the nation is pulsing as high in its veins as when Milton wrote, perhaps higher; there is no want of books or of men; and as we do not despise General Buller because he is not Cromwell, so do not let us despise — for not being Milton. But it is not of poetry that I would speak at this moment. The books with which my thoughtful soul lately retired to solitude were critical, and I come forward now to relate an important discovery. I prophesy in sober seriousness that this season will be remembered in the annals of publishing as the epoch of the final enfranchisement of literary criticism. Let me explain what I mean. In its humble origin criticism was nothing but the appraisement of works of art for the convenience of customers, a form in which it still survives in the *ex cathedra* pronouncements of Messrs.

Sotheby, Wilkinson, & Hodge, or Christie & Manson. The next step was to take on style, and in this stage, which has persisted through the latter half of this waning century, criticism began to be valued for its own sake. Undergraduates in the seventies used to tell each other that a certain lady 'was older than the rocks among which she sits, and like the vampire had been dead many times and learned the secrets of the grave; and had trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants,' and had been, if I remember right, a diver also; and all this varied experience 'had been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lived only in the delicacy with which it had moulded the changing lineaments and tinged the eyelids and the hands.' I can hear still the voice of my bosom friend of those days, now a stockbroker, as he chanted rather than spoke this eloquent passage about a picture of Lionardo's. The criticism of books has been conducted lately on the same eloquent principles. It has ceased to be of consequence what a critic has to say, for no one ever buys a book in deference to his criticism; what has come to matter is how he says it; and if he says it well, his own book or essay will be bought. It has long been obvious to the reflective mind that things could not remain permanently in what was merely a stage of transition. If criticism is to be an art, it must not be restricted to the lower gifts of style and denied the higher gifts of creative imagination. And this final fruitage has at last succeeded to efflorescence. Criticism has culminated. At this moment three remarkable efforts in imaginative criticism are before the public, which, though they may presently be outdistanced and forgotten, yet deserve a cordial recognition as the first product of the emancipating birth-throes of critical genius.

The first and second heroes of this triumvirate are gentlemen who have already won golden opinions in the second and stylistic stage of criticism; their names are Dr. Edward Dowden and Dr. Edmund Gosse. I will not illustrate their merits in this region because they are well known, and because still higher merits await us; but I may say that one superb critical sentence from the former writer's 'Life of Shelley' has to my knowledge earned the distinction of being set in the mathematical examination of one of our universities, so magnificently tropical, in every sense, is its use of technical terms.¹ The third of our heroes has plucked his previous laurels in

¹ 'The mass and momentum of Byron's genius in its impact with the mind of Shelley had an effect like that of a planet sheering its way through the luminous mist of a comet in flight' (ii. 12).

the less adventurous field of pure romance—I refer to the distinguished author of ‘Erewhon,’ Mr. Samuel Butler. The work that each has this autumn achieved in the hitherto unopened country of imaginative criticism may be shortly summarised as follows. Dr. Dowden has shown us in one splendid example that the masterpieces of literature are not exhausted when they are appreciated by the man in the street; but, on the contrary, that beyond and above this mirror-like torpor of appreciation lies a process of imaginative reconstruction into his own likeness by each reader who is capable of the effort, so that not only do we, as Hazlitt says, become Hamlet but Hamlet becomes ourselves. Dr. Gosse has shown us how the passionate precipitations of lyrical genius may be subtilised back into the passionate moods and moments which once gave them birth, so as to enrich the too scanty record in every poet’s biography. And Mr. Butler has shown us how to take the difficult step beyond this, and fill in the inevitable and deplorable interstices between the facts thus evolved, with incidents that are the creation of pure fancy, thus carrying criticism to the highest heaven of invention. But, in case my readers should suspect me of log-rolling, I will proceed to justify my eulogy by chapter and verse.

I. The most convincing way of exhibiting the new Hamlet—for that is the character whom Dr. Dowden has recreated for us—will be to take typical passages from the play the popular interpretations of which will be in everybody’s mind, and compare with them the same passages as seen in the new light reflected from the commentator’s personality—

The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration and the critic’s dream.

To begin with, we may take the best known line in the whole play:

Ham. To be or not to be, that is the question.

‘Here, at any rate,’ the unimaginative reader will say, ‘there is no scope for critical reconstruction: the words are of the simplest, and convey a simple meaning.’ To you, perhaps, my friend, and to me; but, as Mr. Watson tells us:

‘They see not clearliest who see all things clear.

We may have thought that Hamlet was merely debating ‘the open question;’ but see what we lose by being gross Anglo-Saxons; see how much more interesting is the new Dublin Hamlet: ‘Is my present project of active resistance against wrong to be or

not to be; active resistance to evil or passive fortitude, which is more worthy of me?' Shall I whack my uncle over the head from behind with my shillelagh, or wait till I can persuade him to tread upon the tail of my coat? I need not point out the greater nobility of this conception, and its moral importance at the present moment when suicide is so much in the air.

Hor. There's no offence, my lord.

Ham. Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,
And much offence too.

Critics of far lower rank have already called attention to the Irish friend of Hamlet, who makes a too silent and fugitive appearance in the play, in the single line addressed to him:

Now might I do it, Pat, when he is praying.

And this line, taken in combination with the oath above quoted, should suffice to quiet any old-fashioned people who make a conscience of geography, and assert that Hamlet could not have been, and cannot even now be, an Irishman because he was and is a Dane. Certainly he was a Dane, and is; but henceforth he is also an Irishman. In the ideal world of imagination the two facts are not incompatible. In the ideal world of poetry, Denmark may be a province of Ireland, just as Bohemia may have a seaboard. And so Dr. Dowden, realising what an invocation of St. Patrick must have implied to an Irish Hamlet, notes the special propriety of the oath, in the fact that his father's ghost has called Claudius 'a serpent,' and St. Patrick was the enemy and expeller of serpents.

The lady shall say her mind freely, or
the blank verse shall halt for't.

Critical imagination had a tough piece of work with this passage, but it triumphed in the end. The 'ladies' on the Elizabethan stage were boys, and boys had then, as now, a short-memory and a bad ear for verse. But in these days, when 'ladies' are ladies, a completely new interpretation is required, adapted at once to their idiosyncrasy and to the most fashionable type of play. This the imaginative critic supplies, but I leave it in his volume.

Ham. Look you, how cheerfully my mother
looks, and my father died within 's two hours.

Oph. Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

Ham. So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black,
for I'll have a suit of sables.

By a happy paraphrase of this last speech of Hamlet's, Dr. Dowden imaginatively brings out the broad wit and cheery good humour of the fat Irish prince. 'What an age since my father died! I am quite an old gentleman! I mean to be rich and comfortable.' It would vastly help readers to appreciate his new Hamlet if Dr. Dowden would paraphrase the whole play.

But perhaps the magical power of the new art is most vividly shown in the learned professor's rehabilitation of Hamlet's nonsense. A mere Dane may talk nonsense, but not an Irish Dane; what looks like nonsense on the surface must, if probed deep enough, reveal itself as epigram.

Ros. My lord, you must tell us where the body is,
and go with us to the king.

Ham. The body is with the king, but the king is not
with the body.

In interpreting this dark passage it must be remembered that there were more kings than one in Brentford, and more dead bodies than one in the play; and, further, that although it was in character for Rosencranz, the fawning courtier, to call Claudius king, it would have been grossly unfilial in Hamlet to follow suit. Then, by taking the first 'body' of Polonius and the second of Hamlet senior, and the first 'king' of Hamlet senior with his body on, and the second with his body off, we get this fine piece of wit, which is both paraphrastically sound and dramatically convincing: 'The body lies in death with the king my father, but my father walks disembodied.' Was it not Kepler who congratulated the Creator of the universe on having at last some one on the earth who could appreciate his handiwork? If Shakespeare's spirit takes any cognisance of his commentators, he must feel that if he has had to wait nigh three full centuries for an audience who can penetrate his meaning, he has not waited in vain.

And so I might go on, exemplifying by passage after passage the interpretative changes by which the over-familiar Hamlet has been born anew; but our other two heroes of the new criticism have an equal claim on our recognition. I cannot, however, pass by altogether without remark the subtle way in which a new construction of the characters reacts upon the familiar rhythms of the play. It is a fact, in art as in nature, that 'soul is form and doth the body make,' and a transmigration of souls cannot be effected without some corresponding changes in the body. I will

write down a few of the lines as they stand in this most marvellous edition, and ask my readers whether the new rhythm is not in keeping with the new spiritual interpretation.

Note, for example, the cheery, jolly-good-fellow tone in which Hamlet addresses the pater when he turns up on the Elsinore platform :

Thou comest in such a questionable [*i.e.* conversational] shape
That I will speak to thee : I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father ; royal Dane O, answer me [*punches him in the ribs*].

On the other hand, the new cheerfulness in the son begets, as it obviously must, a new depth of gloom in the father. He takes to triple iteration, perhaps because he thinks Hamlet inattentive, or else on the Bellman's theory in the 'Hunting of the Snark :'

What I tell you three times is true.

He says *adieu* three times over instead of twice, as he always used ; and finding that Hamlet has a line to say with a triple iteration in it, a very proper and filial line too :

Oh, horrible, oh, horrible, most horrible !

he says it himself before the other can get it out ; and then replies to it as if the other had said it :

If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not.

Altogether a very human and Irish and irascible ghost, whose acquaintance we are delighted to have made. And we look forward with impatience to Dr. Dowden's hibernicising of our other old friends 'Macbeth,' 'Julius Cæsar,' 'The Merchant of Venice,' and the rest.

In logical process of development, Dr. Gosse's contribution to the new art comes next to Dr. Dowden's, and should next be considered ; but as Mr. Butler has dealt with Shakespeare, it will be convenient to call attention to his merits first. It can be done very briefly, for his achievement so far, in this matter of Shakespearean criticism, is the invention of a group of incidents to account for certain words and phrases in the sonnets. Thus Shakespeare says in one place :

As a decrepit father takes delight
To see his active child do deeds of youth,
So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite,
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth.

Upon which Mr. Butler's energetic imagination invents a 'scuffle'

in which Shakespeare was lamed, where previous generations of prosaic commentators have been content to see nothing but a bald metaphor. Again Shakespeare says :

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day
And make me travel forth without my cloak ?

This figure of speech Mr. Butler's eye, rolling in a fine frenzy, seizes upon, and his critical pen gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name. He invents a practical joke played upon the poet by his young friend, but somewhat disappointingly suggests that the same joke was at the bottom of the lameness too. 'Hardly had he laid the cloak aside before he was surprised according to a preconcerted scheme, and very probably roughly handled, for we find him lame soon afterwards, and apparently not fully recovered a twelvemonth later' (*cf.* Sonnet 109. 3). If Mr. Butler will only continue as he has begun, the biographers of Shakespeare will in future have no need to lament the scantiness of their material; and that learned dryasdust, Mr. Sidney Lee, will have to burn his book. What disquiets me, however, in a person of Mr. Butler's intrepid fancy is his moderation in the use of it. Can it be intermittent ?

And so we come to our third hero, Dr. Gosse, whose contribution to the new criticism is, as I have already said, not a coining of incident like Mr. Butler's, but a reduction of poems by imaginative insight to the passionate events out of which they originally sprang. The debt we owe him is more for the method than for the particular application he himself has already made of it, for Donne, the poet on whom he has been experimenting, is not a person about whom the public is much interested. But the method is capable of infinite application. In fact I feel myself a critic new inspired with a mission to write on these principles the life of Dr. Gosse, whose volumes of verse stand in attractive row upon my handiest shelf. And one day I may yield to the fascination. At this moment the potency of the new principle can perhaps be more safely exhibited by applying it to the lyrical confessions of a poet no longer with us. Dr. Gosse himself will perhaps do justice to the early history of Browning in due course; in the meantime an amateur critic may be allowed to exhibit some of the more obvious discoveries to which the new method must lead.

The scene of the more interesting of these newly recovered

incidents is, as might have been anticipated, the Italy of which Browning was always so fond. The question of time and place will have to be much canvassed before a final settlement can commend itself universally, and there will inevitably be difficulties which can never now be satisfactorily settled. If only the new criticism had arisen in the poet's lifetime, and while the Browning Society was at its zenith of activity, the results achieved might have been fuller and more accurately concatenated. Still, the incidents remain to us, and their exact sequence is of quite inferior importance.

The first thing to strike a new critic in the search for biographical material is Mr. Browning's curious *penchant* for duchesses, which is every bit as remarkable as Donne's for countesses, only Browning's were not, of course, English duchesses, who are rare birds, but the more widely spread Italian species. One of them, a Ferrarese lady, is described as his *last* duchess, implying therefore at least two predecessors, one of whom was probably the duchess that ran away from the effeminate duke with a gipsy woman; who is thus seen to have been in league with Browning, if not, as I suspect, Browning himself in disguise. From a poem called 'Love among the Ruins,' it would appear that they had found a very safe and picturesque trysting-place. It is, however, neither of these but the first duchess of all who, I confess, attracts me most. Her story is contained in the poem called 'In a Gondola.' She was a Venetian lady, whose brothers for some reason had a spite against Mr. Browning, and hired bravos to stab him—happily, as we know, without permanent effect. The poem is interesting, apart from its main story, for a stanza which throws a side-light upon the poem of Holy Cross Day:

What are we two?

I am a Jew

And carry thee farther than friends can pursue,

To a feast of our tribe.

To return once more to the *last* duchess, whom Mr. Browning seems to have got rid of with a suddenness that would have attracted more attention in England, I cannot make up my mind if she is identical with Porphyria, or whether Porphyria is another lady friend whom the poet helped to a too realistic immortality. Anyhow the duel that is recorded in 'Before' and 'After' probably represents the violent end of this violent passion. It is demonstrable that the beginning of the end is sketched in the poem called 'A

Lovers' Quarrel.' Compare, *e.g.*, the line in that poem, 'Laughs with so little cause,' with the following passage from 'My Last Duchess':

She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
 O sir, she smiled not
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave command;
Then all smiles stopped together.

It would be too long a tale to unravel and set out and appor- tion among the duchesses all the tangle of delightful incident that is chronicled in Mr. Browning's many volumes. And it would require a subtler brain and a surer hand than mine to accomplish the task satisfactorily. I cherish the hope that Dr. Gosse in his recovered leisure may be prevailed upon to undertake it.

URBANUS SYLVAN.

P.S.—I spent a few moments, since writing the above, in turning over that fascinating book, Whitaker's 'Titled Persons,' in the hope that some entry or some comment of its learned and critical editor might throw light on the identity of one or other of Mr. Browning's duchesses, but without result. In case your readers do not know that Mr. Whitaker combines the function of poetical critic with that of historiographer-general, may I invite their attention to the entry 'Tennyson, Baron Hallam,' in which occurs a very remarkable passage, from which a short extract may be welcome?

We are persuaded that Tennyson himself would have been the last to rate his own claims as superior to those of Byron; and it is with the latter that the pre-eminence for the nineteenth century will doubtless remain, except in the judgment of a few specialists, and of those writers on everything under the sun who, having often but the slenderest acquaintance with their subject, seek to keep up with the spirit of the age by writing bigly and bravely in its advance. The first place is not at all likely to be Tennyson's. But what poet is to occupy the second position is a much nicer question, and the respective champions of Tennyson, Shelley, and Wordsworth must continue to discuss it between themselves, while possibly if the literary world would but revert to the reading of Campbell they would find in him a formidable competitor for all three.

Under the titles 'Arnold, Sir Edwin' and 'Morris, Sir Lewis' there are no reflections, as Mr. Whitaker calls no man unhappy till he is dead. It is therefore only in the case of hereditary titles that there is an opportunity for his criticism. U. S.

THE ISLE OF UNREST.¹

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN,

AUTHOR OF 'THE SOWERS,' 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' 'IN KEDAR'S TENTS,' ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOVING FINGER.

'The Moving Finger writes : and, having writ,
Moves on : nor all thy piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.'

THE afternoon sun was lowering towards a heavy bank of clouds hanging still and sullen over the Mediterranean. A mistral was blowing. The last yellow rays shone fiercely upon the towering coast of Corsica, and the windows of the village of Olmeta glittered like gold.

There are two Olmetas in Corsica, both in the north, both on the west coast, both perched high like an eagle's nest, both looking down upon those lashed waters of the Mediterranean, which are not the waters that poets sing of, for they are as often white as they are blue; they are seldom glassy except in the height of summer, and sailors tell that they are as treacherous as any waters of the earth. Neither aneroid nor weather-wisdom may, as a matter of fact, tell when a mistral will arise, how it will blow how veer, how drop and rise, and drop again. For it will blow one day beneath a cloudless sky, lashing the whole sea white like milk, and blow harder to-morrow under racing clouds.

The great chestnut-trees in and around Olmeta groaned and strained in the grip of their lifelong foe. The small door, the tiny windows, of every house were rigorously closed. The whole place had a wind-swept air despite the heavy foliage. Even the roads, and notably the broad 'Place,' had been swept clean and dustless. And in the middle of the 'Place,' between the fountain and the church steps, a man lay dead upon his face.

It is as well to state here, once for all, that we are dealing with Olmeta di Tuda, and not that other Olmeta—the virtuous di

¹ Copyright, 1890, by H. S. Scott, in the United States of America.

Capocorso, in fact, which would shudder at the thought of a dead man lying on its 'Place,' before the windows of the very Mairie, under the shadow of the church. For Cap Corse is the good boy of Corsica, where men think sorrowfully of the wilder communes to the south, and raise their eyebrows at the very mention of Corte and Sartene—where, at all events, the women have for husbands men, and not degenerate Pisan vine-snippers.

It was not so long ago either. For the man might have been alive to-day, though he would have been old and bent no doubt; for he was a thick-set man, and must have been strong. He had, indeed, carried his lead up from the road that runs by the Guadelle river. Was he not to be traced all the way up the short cut through the olive terraces by one bloody footprint at regular intervals? You could track his passage across the 'Place,' towards the fountain of which he had fallen short like a poisoned rat that tries to reach water and fails.

He lay quite alone, still grasping the gun which he had never laid aside since boyhood. No one went to him; no one had attempted to help him. He lay as he had fallen, with a thin stream of blood running slowly from one trouser-leg. For this was Corsican work—that is to say, dirty work—from behind a rock, in the back, at close range, without warning or mercy, as honest men would be ashamed to shoot the merest beast of the forest. It was as likely as not a charge of buckshot low down in the body, leaving the rest to hemorrhage or gangrene.

All Olmeta knew of it, and every man took care that it should be no business of his. Several had approached, pipe in mouth, and looked at the dead man without comment; but all had gone away again, idly, indifferently. For in this the most beautiful of the islands, human life is held cheaper than in any land of Europe.

Some one, it was understood, had gone to tell the gendarmes down at St. Florent. There was no need to send and tell his wife—half a dozen women were racing through the olive groves to get the first taste of that. Perhaps some one had gone towards Oletta to meet the Abbé Susini, whose business in a measure this must be.

The sun suddenly dipped behind the heavy bank of clouds and the mountains darkened. Although it lies in the very centre of the Mediterranean, Corsica is a gloomy land, and the summits of her high mountains are more often covered than clear. It

is a land of silence and brooding quiet. The women are seldom gay; the men, in their heavy clothes of dark corduroy, have little to say for themselves. Some of them were standing now in the shadow of the great trees, smoking their pipes in silence, and looking with a studied indifference at nothing. Each was prepared to swear before a jury at the Bastia assizes that he knew nothing of the 'accident,' as it is here called, to Pietro Andrei, and had not seen him crawl up to Olmeta to die. Indeed, Pietro Andrei's death seemed to be nobody's business, though we are told that not so much as a sparrow may fall unheeded.

The Abbé Susini was coming now—a little fiery man, with the walk of one who was slightly bow-legged, though his cassock naturally concealed this defect. He was small and not too broad, with a narrow face and clean straight features—something of the Spaniard, something of the Greek, nothing Italian, nothing French. In a word, this was a Corsican, which is to say that he was different from any other European race, and would, as sure as there is corn in Egypt, be overbearing, masterful, impossible. He was, of course, clean shaven, as brown as old oak, with little flashing black eyes. His cassock was a good one, and his hat, though dusty, shapely and new. But his whole bearing threw, as it were, into the observer's face the suggestion that the habit does not make the priest.

He came forward without undue haste, and displayed little surprise and no horror.

'Quite like old times,' he said to himself, remembering the days of Louis Philippe. He knelt down beside the dead man, and perhaps the attitude reminded him of his calling; for he fell to praying, and made the gesture of the cross over Andrei's head. Then suddenly he leaped to his feet, and shook his lean fist out towards the valley and St. Florent, as if he knew whence this trouble came.

'Provided they would keep their work in their own commune,' he cried, 'instead of bringing disgrace on a parish that has not had the gendarmes this—this——'

'Three days,' added one of the bystanders, who had drawn near. And he said it with a certain pride, as of one well pleased to belong to a virtuous community.

But the priest was not listening. He had already turned aside in his quick jerky way; for he was a comparatively young man. He was looking through the olives towards the south.

‘It is the women,’ he said, and his face suddenly hardened. He was impulsive, it appeared—quick to feel for others, fiery in his anger, hasty in his judgment.

From the direction in which he and the bystanders looked came the hum of many voices, and the high incessant shrieks of one who seemed demented. Presently a confused procession appeared from the direction of the south, hurrying through the narrow street now called the Rue Carnot. It was headed by a woman, who led a little child, running and stumbling as he ran. At her heels a number of women hurried, confusedly shouting, moaning, and wailing. The men stood waiting for them in dead silence—a characteristic scene. The leading woman seemed to be superior to her neighbours, for she wore a black silk handkerchief on her head instead of a white or coloured cotton. It is almost a mantilla, and marks as clear a social distinction in Corsica as does that head-dress in Spain. She dragged at the child, and scarce turned her head when he fell and scrambled as best he could to his feet. He laughed and crowed with delight, remembering last year’s carnival with that startling photographic memory of early childhood which never forgets.

At every few steps the woman gave a shriek as if she were suffering some intermittent agony which caught her at regular intervals. At the sight of the crowd she gave a quick cry of despair, and ran forward, leaving her child sprawling on the road. She knelt by the dead man’s side with shriek after shriek, and seemed to lose all control over herself, for she gave way to those strange gestures of despair of which many read in novels and a few in the Scriptures, and which come by instinct to those who have no reading at all. She dragged the handkerchief from her head, and threw it over her face. She beat her breast. She beat the very ground with her clenched hands. Her little boy, having gathered his belongings together and dusted his cotton frock, now came forward, and stood watching her with his fingers at his mouth. He took it to be a game which he did not understand; as indeed it was—the game of life.

The priest scratched his chin with his forefinger, which was probably a habit with him when puzzled, and stood looking down out of the corner of his eyes at the ground.

It was he, however, who moved first, and, stooping, loosed the clenched fingers round the gun. It was a double-barrelled gun, at full cock, and every man in the little crowd assembled carried

one like it. To this day, if one meets a man, even in the streets of Corte or Ajaccio, who carries no gun, it may be presumed that it is only because he pins greater faith on a revolver.

Neither hammer had fallen, and the abbé gave a little nod. It was, it seemed, the usual thing to make quite sure before shooting, so that there might be no unnecessary waste of powder or risk of reprisal. The woman looked at the gun, too, and knew the meaning of the raised hammers.

She leaped to her feet, and looked round at the sullen faces.

'And some of you know who did it,' she said; 'and you will help the murderer when he goes to the maquis, and take him food, and tell him when the gendarmes are hunting him.'

She waved her hand fiercely towards the mountains, which loomed, range behind range, dark and forbidding to the south, towards Calvi and Corte. But the men only shrugged their shoulders; for the forest and the mountain brushwood were no longer the refuge they used to be in this the last year of the iron rule of Napoleon III., who, whether he possessed or not the Corsican blood that his foes deny him, knew, at all events, how to rule Corsica better than any man before or since.

'No, no,' said the priest soothingly. 'Those days are gone. He will be taken, and justice will be done.'

But he spoke without conviction, almost as if he had no faith in this vaunted regeneration of a people whose history is a story of endless strife—as if he could see with a prophetic eye thirty years into the future, down to the present day, when the last state of that land is worse than the first.

'Justice!' cried the woman. 'There is no justice in Corsica! What had Pietro done that he should lie there? Only his duty—only that for which he was paid. He was the Peruccas' agent, and because he made the idlers pay their rent, they threatened him. Because he put up fences, they raised their guns to him. Because he stopped their thieving and their lawlessness, they shot him. He drove their cattle from the fields because they were Perucca's fields, and he was paid to watch his master's interests. But Perucca they dare not touch, because his clan is large, and would hunt the murderer down. If he was caught, the Peruccas would make sure of the jury—ay! and of the judge at Bastia—but Pietro is not of Corsica; he has no friends and no clan, so justice is not for him.'

She knelt down again as she spoke and laid her hand on her

dead husband's back, but she made no attempt to move him. For although Pietro Andrei was an Italian, his wife was Corsican—a woman of Bonifacio, that grim town on a rock so often besieged and never yet taken by a fair fight. She had been brought up in, as it were, an atmosphere of conventional lawlessness, and knew that it is well not to touch a dead man till the gendarmes have seen him, but to send a child or an old woman to the gendarmerie, and then to stand aloof and know nothing, and feign stupidity; so that the officials, when they arrive, may find the whole village at work in the fields or sitting in their homes, while the dead, who can tell no tales, has suddenly few friends and no enemies.

Then Andrei's widow rose slowly to her feet. Her face was composed now and set. She arranged the black silk handkerchief on her head, and set her dress in order. She was suddenly calm and quiet.

'But see,' she said, looking round into eyes that failed to meet her own, 'in this country each man must execute his own justice. It has always been so, and it will be so, so long as there are any Corsicans left. And if there is no man left, then the women must do it.'

She tied her apron tighter, as if about to undertake some hard domestic duty, and brushed the dust from her black dress.

'Come here,' she said, turning to the child, and lapsing into the soft dialect of the south and east—'come here, thou child of Pietro Andrei.'

The child came forward. He was probably two years old, and understood nothing that was passing.

'See here, you of Olmeta,' she said composedly; and, stooping down, she dipped her finger in the pool of blood that had collected in the dust. 'See here—and here.'

As she spoke she hastily smeared the blood over the child's face and dragged him away from the priest, who had stepped forward.

'No, no,' he protested. 'Those times are past.'

'Past!' said the woman, with a flash of fury. 'All the country knows that your own mother did it to you at Sartene, where you come from.'

The abbé made no answer, but, taking the child by the arm, dragged him gently away from his mother. With his other hand he sought in his pocket for a handkerchief. But he was a lone

man, without a housekeeper, and the handkerchief was missing. The child looked from one to the other, laughing uncertainly, with his grimly decorated face.

Then the priest stooped, and with the skirt of his cassock wiped the child's face.

'There,' he said to the woman, 'take him home, for I hear the gendarmes coming.'

Indeed, the trotting of horses and the clank of the long swinging sabres could be heard on the road below the village, and one by one the onlookers dropped away, leaving the Abbé Susini alone at the foot of the church steps.

CHAPTER II.

CHEZ CLÉMENT.

'Comme on est heureux quand on sait ce qu'on veut !'

It was the dinner hour at the Hotel Clément at Bastia; and the event was of greater importance than the outward appearance of the house would seem to promise. For there is no promise at all about the house on the left-hand side of Bastia's one street, the Boulevard du Palais, which bears, as its only sign, a battered lamp with the word 'Clément' printed across it. The ground floor is merely a rope and hemp warehouse. A small Corsican donkey, no bigger than a Newfoundland dog, lives in the basement, and passes many of his waking hours in what may be termed the entrance hall of the hotel, appearing to consider himself in some sort a concierge. The upper floors of the huge Genoese house are let out in large or small apartments to mysterious families, of which the younger members are always to be met carrying jugs carefully up and down the greasy common staircase.

The first floor is the Hôtel Clément, or, to be more correct, one is 'chez Clément' on the first floor.

'You stay with Clément' will be the natural remark of any on board the Marseilles or Leghorn steamer, on being told that the traveller disembarks at Bastia.

'We shall meet to-night chez Clément,' the officers say to each other on leaving the parade ground at four o'clock.

'Déjeuner chez Clément' is the usual ending to a notice of a

marriage, or a first communion, in the 'Petit Bastiais,' that greatest of all foolscap-size journals.

It is comforting to reflect, in these times of hurried changes, that the traveller to Bastia may still find himself chez Clément—may still have to kick at the closed door of the first-floor flat, and find that door opened by Clément himself, always affable, always gentlemanly, with the same crumbs strewed carelessly down the same waistcoat, or, if it is evening time, in his spotless cook's dress. One may be sure of the same grave welcome, and the easy transition from grave to gay, the smiling grand manner of conducting the guest to one of those vague and darksome bedrooms, where the jug and the basin never match, where the floor is of red tiles, with a piece of uncertain carpet sliding hither and thither, with the shutters always shut, and the mustiness of the middle ages hanging heavy in the air. For Bastia has not changed, and never will. And it is not only to be fervently hoped, but seems likely, that Clément will never grow old, and never die, but continue to live and demonstrate the startling fact that one may be born and live all one's life in a remote forgotten town, and still be a man of the world.

The soup had been served precisely at six, and the four artillery officers were already seated at the square table near the fireplace, which was and is still exclusively the artillery table. The other *habitues* were in their places at one or other of the half-dozen tables that fill the room—two gentlemen from the Prefecture, a civil engineer of the projected railway to Corte, a commercial traveller of the old school, and, at the corner table, farthest from the door, Colonel Gilbert of the Engineers. A clever man this, who had seen service in the Crimea, and had invariably distinguished himself whenever the opportunity occurred; but he was one of those who await, and do not seek opportunities. Perhaps he had enemies, or, what is worse, no friends; for at the age of forty he found himself appointed to Bastia, one of the waste places of the War Office, where an inferior man would have done better.

Colonel Gilbert was a handsome man, with a fair moustache, a high forehead, surmounted by thin receding smooth hair and good-natured idle eyes. He lunched and dined chez Clément always, and was frankly, good-naturedly bored at Bastia. He hated Corsica, had no sympathy with the Corsican, and was a Northern Frenchman to the tips of his long white fingers.

'Your Bastia, my good Clément,' he said to the host, who invariably came to the dining-room with the roast and solicited the opinion of each guest upon the dinner in a few tactful easy words—'your Bastia is a sad place.'

This evening Colonel Gilbert was in a less talkative mood than usual, and exchanged only a nod with his artillery colleagues as he passed to his own small table. He opened his newspaper, and became interested in it at once. It was several days old, and had come by way of Nice and Ajaccio from Paris. All France was at this time eager for news, and every Frenchman studied the journal of his choice with that uneasiness which seems to foreshadow in men's hearts the approach of any great event. For this was the spring of 1870, when France, under the hitherto iron rule of her adventurer emperor, suddenly began to plunge and rear, while the nations stood around her wondering who should receive the first kick. The emperor was ill; the cheaper journals were already talking of his funeral. He was uneasy and restless, turning those dull eyes hither and thither over Europe—a man of inscrutable face and deep hidden plans—perhaps the greatest adventurer who ever sat on a throne. Condemned by a French Court of Peers in 1840 to imprisonment for life, he went to Ham with the quiet question, 'But how long does perpetuity last in France?' And eight years later he was absolute master of the country.

Corsica in particular was watching events, for Corsica was cowed. She had come under the rule of this despot, and for the first time in her history had found her master. Instead of being numbered by hundreds, as they were before and are again now at the end of the century, the outlaws hiding in the mountains scarce exceeded a score. The elections were conducted more honestly than had ever been before, and the Continental newspapers spoke hopefully of the dawn of civilisation showing itself among a people who have ever been lawless, have ever loved war better than peace.

'But it is a false dawn,' said the Abbé Susini of Olmeta, himself an insatiable reader of newspapers, a keen and ardent politician. Like the majority of Corsicans, he was a staunch Bonapartist, and held that the founder of that marvellous dynasty was the greatest man to walk this earth since the days of direct divine inspiration.

It was only because Napoleon III. was a Bonaparte that

Corsica endured his tyranny; perhaps, indeed, tyranny and an iron rule suited better than equity or tolerance a people descended from the most ancient of the fighting races, speaking a tongue wherein occur expressions of hate and strife that are Tuscan, Sicilian, Greek, Spanish, and Arabic.

Now that the emperor's hand was losing its grip on the helm, there were many in Corsica keenly alive to the fact that any disturbance in France would probably lead to anarchy in the turbulent island. There were even some who saw a hidden motive in the appointment of Colonel Gilbert as engineer officer to a fortified place that had no need of his services.

Gilbert himself probably knew that his appointment had been made in pursuance of the emperor's policy of road and rail. For Corsica was to be opened up by a railway, and would have none of it. And though to-day the railway from Bastia to Ajaccio is at last opened, the station at Corte remains a fortified place with a loopholed wall around it.

But Colonel Gilbert kept his own counsel. He sat, indeed, on the board of the struggling railway—a gift of the French Government to a department which has never paid its way, has always been an open wound. But he never spoke there, and listened to the fierce speeches of the local members with his idle easy smile. He seemed to stand aloof from his new neighbours and their insular interests. He was, it appeared, a cultured man, and perhaps found none in this wild island who could understand his thoughts. His attitude towards his surroundings was, in a word, the usual indifferent attitude of the Frenchman in exile, reading only French newspapers, fixing his attention only on France, and awaiting with such patience as he could command the moment to return thither.

'Any news?' asked one of the artillery officers—a sub-lieutenant recently attached to his battery, a penniless possessor of an historic name, who perhaps had dreams of carving his way through to the front again.

The colonel shrugged his shoulders.

'You may have the papers afterwards,' he said; for it was not wise to discuss any news in a public place at that time. 'See you at the Réunion, no doubt.'

And he did not speak again except to Clément, who came round to take the opinion of each guest upon the fare provided.

'Passable,' said the colonel—'passable, my good Clément. But do you know, I could send you to prison for providing this excellent leveret at this time of year? Are there no game laws, my friend?'

But Clément only laughed and spread out his hands, for Corsica chooses to ignore the game laws. And the colonel, having finished his coffee, buckled on his sword, and went out into the twilight streets of what was once the capital of Corsica. Bastia, indeed, has, like the majority of men and women, its history written on its face. On the high land above the old port stands the citadel, just as the Genoese merchant-adventurers planned it five hundred years ago. Beneath the citadel, and clustered round the port, is the little old Genoese town, no bigger than a village, which served for 250 years as capital to an island in constant war, against which it had always to defend itself.

It would seem that some hundred years ago, just before the island became nominally a French possession, Bastia, for some reason or another, took it into its municipal head to grow, and it ran as it were all down the hill to that which is now the new harbour. It built two broad streets of tall Genoese houses, of which one somehow missed fire and became a slum, while the other, with its great houses but half inhabited, is to-day the Boulevard du Palais, where fashionable Bastia promenades itself—when it is too windy, as it almost always is, to walk on the Place St. Nicholas—where all the shops are, and where the modern European necessities of daily life are not to be bought for love or money.

There are, however, two excellent knife-shops in the Boulevard du Palais, where every description of stiletto may be purchased, where, indeed, the enterprising may buy a knife which will not only go shrewdly into a foe, but come right out on the other side—in front, that is to say, for no true Corsican is so foolish as to stab anywhere but in the back—and, protruding thus, will display some pleasing legend, such as 'Vendetta,' or 'I serve my master,' or 'Viva Corsica,' roughly engraved on the long blade. There is a macaroni warehouse. There are two of those mysterious Mediterranean provision warehouses, with some ancient dried sausages hanging in the window, and either doorpost flanked by a tub of sardines, highly, and yet, it would seem, insufficiently cured. There is a tiny book-shop displaying a choice of religious pamphlets and a fly-blown copy of a treatise on viniculture.

And finally, an ironmonger will sell you anything but a bath, while he thrives on a lively trade in percussion-caps and gun-powder.

Colonel Gilbert did not pause to look at these bewildering shop-windows, for the simple reason that he knew every article there displayed.

He was, it will be remembered, a leisurely Frenchman, than whom there are few human beings of a more easily aroused attention. Any small street incident sufficed to make him pause. He had the air of one waiting for a train, who knows that it will not come for hours yet. He strolled down the boulevard, smoking a cigarette, and presently turned to the right, emerging with head raised to meet the sea-breeze upon that deserted promenade, the Place St. Nicholas.

Here he paused, and stood with his head slightly inclined to one side—an attitude usually considered to be indicative of the artistic temperament, and admired the prospect. The 'Place' was deserted, and in the middle the great statue of Napoleon stood staring blankly across the sea towards Elba. There is, whether the artist intended it or not, a look of stony amazement on this marble face as it gazes at the island of Elba lying pink and hazy a few miles across that rippled sea; for on this side of Corsica there is more peace than in the open waters of the Gulf of Lyons.

'Surely,' that look seems to say, 'the world could never expect that puny island to hold *me*.'

Colonel Gilbert stood and looked dreamily across the sea. It was plain to the most incompetent observer that the statue represented one class of men—those who make their opportunities; while Gilbert, with his high and slightly receding forehead, his lazy eyes and good-natured mouth, was a fair type of that other class which may take advantage of opportunities that offer themselves. The majority of men have not even the pluck to do that, which makes it easy for mediocre people to get on in this world.

Colonel Gilbert turned on his heel and walked slowly back to the Réunion des Officiers—the military club which stands on the Place St. Nicholas immediately behind the statue of Napoleon—a not too lively place of entertainment, with a billiard-room, a reading-room, and half a dozen iron tables and chairs on the pavement in front of the house. Here the colonel seated himself,

called for a liqueur, and sat watching a young moon rise from the sea beyond the Islet of Capraja.

It was the month of February, and the southern spring was already in the air. The twilight is short in these latitudes, and it was now nearly night. In Corsica, as in Spain, the coolest hour is between sunset and nightfall. With complete darkness there comes a warm air from the ground. This was now beginning to make itself felt; but Gilbert had not only the pavement, but the whole Place St. Nicholas, to himself. There are two reasons why Corsicans do not walk abroad at night—the risk of a chill and the risk of meeting one's enemy.

Colonel Gilbert gave no thought to these matters, but sat with crossed legs and one spurred heel thrown out, contentedly waiting as if for that train which he must assuredly catch, or for that opportunity, perhaps, which was so long in coming that he no longer seemed to look for it. And while he sat there a man came clanking from the town—a tired man, with heavy feet and the iron heels of the labourer. He passed Colonel Gilbert, and then, seeming to have recognised him by the light of the moon, paused, and came back.

'Monsieur le Colonel,' he said, without raising his hand to his hat, as a Frenchman would have done.

'Yes,' replied the colonel's pleasant voice, with no ring of recognition in it.

'It is Mattei—the driver of the St. Florent diligence,' explained the man, who, indeed, carried his badge of office, a long whip.

'Of course; but I recognised you almost at once,' said the colonel, with that friendliness which is so noticeable in the Republic to-day.

'You have seen me on the road often enough,' said the man, 'and I have seen you, Monsieur le Colonel, riding over to the Casa Perucca.'

'Of course.'

'You know Perucca's agent, Pietro Andrei?'

'Yes.'

'He was shot in the back on the Olmeta road this afternoon.'

Colonel Gilbert gave a slight start.

'Is that so?' he said at length, quietly, after a pause.

'Yes,' said the diligence-driver; and without further comment he walked on, keeping well in the middle of the road, as it is wise to do when one has enemies.

CHAPTER III.

A BY-PATH.

'L'intrigue c'est tromper son homme; l'habileté c'est faire qu'il se trompe lui-même.'

FOR an idle-minded man, Colonel Gilbert was early astir the next morning, and rode out of the town soon after sunrise, following the Vescovato road, and chatting pleasantly enough with the workers already on foot and in saddle on their way to the great plain of Biguglia, where men may labour all day, though, if they spend so much as one night there, they must surely die. For the eastern coast of Corsica consists of a series of level plains where malarial fever is as rife as in any African swamp, and the traveller may ride through a fertile land where eucalyptus and palm grow amid the vineyards, and yet no human being may live after sunset. The labourer goes forth to his work in the morning accompanied by his dog, carrying the ubiquitous double-barrelled gun at full cock, and returns in the evening to his mountain village, where, at all events, he may breathe God's air without fear.

The colonel turned to the right a few miles out, following the road which leads straight to that mountain wall which divides all Corsica into the 'near' and the 'far' side—into two peoples, speaking a different dialect, following slightly different customs, and only finding themselves united in the presence of a common foe. The road mounts steadily, and this February morning had broken grey and cloudy, so that the colonel found himself in the mists that hang over these mountains during the spring months, long before he reached the narrow entrance to the grim and soundless Lancone Defile. The heavy clouds had nestled down the mountains, covering them like a huge thickness of wet cotton-wool. The road, which is little more than a mule-path, is cut in the face of the rock, and, far below, the river runs musically down to Lake Biguglia. The colonel rode alone, though he could perceive another traveller on the winding road in front of him—a peasant in dark clothes, with a huge felt hat, astride on a little active Corsican horse—sure of foot, quick and nervous, as fiery as the men of this strange land.

The defile is narrow, and the sun rarely warms the river that runs through the depths where the foot of man can never have

trodden since God fashioned this earth. Colonel Gilbert, it would appear, was accustomed to solitude. Perhaps he had known it so well during his sojourn in this island of silence and loneliness, that he had fallen a victim to its dangerous charms, and, being indolent by nature, had discovered that it is less trouble to be alone than to cultivate the society of man. The Lancone Defile has to this day an evil name. It is not wise to pass through it alone, for some have entered one end never to emerge at the other. Colonel Gilbert pressed his heavy charger, and gained rapidly on the horseman in front of him. When he was within two hundred yards of him, at the highest part of the pass and through the narrow defile, he sought in the inner pocket of his tunic—for in those days French officers possessed no other clothes than their uniform—and produced a letter. He examined it, crumpled it between his fingers, and rubbed it across his dusty knee so that it looked old and travel-stained at once. Then, with the letter in his hand, he put spurs to his horse and galloped after the horseman in front of him. The man turned almost at once in his saddle, as if care rode behind him there.

'Hi! mon ami,' cried the colonel, holding the letter high above his head. 'You have, I imagine, dropped this letter?' he added, as he approached the other, who now awaited him.

'Where? No; but I have dropped no letter. Where was it? On the road?'

'Down there,' answered the colonel, pointing back with his whip, and handing over the letter with a final air as if it were no affair of his.

'Perucca,' read the man slowly, in the manner of one having small dealings with pens and paper, 'Mattei Perucca—at Olmeta.'

'Ah!' said the colonel, lighting a cigarette. He had apparently not troubled to read the address on the envelope.

In such a thinly populated country as Corsica, faces are of higher import than in crowded cities, where types are mingled and individuality soon fades. The colonel had already recognised this man as of Olmeta—one of those, perhaps, who had stood smoking on the 'Place' there when Pietro Andrei crawled towards the fountain and failed to reach it.

'I am going to Olmeta,' said the man, 'and you also, perhaps.'

'No; I am exercising my horse, as you see. I shall turn to the left at the cross-roads, and go towards Murato. I may come round by Olmeta later—if I lose my way.'

The man smiled grimly. In Corsica men rarely laugh.

'You will not do that. You know this country too well for that. You are the officer connected with the railway. I have seen you looking through your instruments at the earth, in the mountains, in the rocks, and down in the plains—everywhere.'

'It is my work,' answered the colonel, tapping with his whip the gold lace on his sleeve. 'One must do what one is ordered.'

The other shrugged his shoulders, not seeming to think that necessary. They rode on in silence, which was only broken from time to time by the colonel, who asked harmless questions as to the names of the mountain summits now appearing through the riven clouds, or the course of the rivers, or the ownership of the wild and rocky land. At the cross-roads they parted.

'I am returning to Olmeta,' said the peasant, as they neared the sign-post, 'and will send that letter up to the Casa Perucca by one of my children. I wonder'—he paused, and, taking the letter from his jacket pocket, turned it curiously in his hand—'I wonder what is in it.'

The colonel shrugged his shoulders and turned his horse's head. It was, it appeared, no business of his to inquire what the letter contained, or to care whether it be delivered or not. Indeed, he appeared to have forgotten all about it.

'Good day, my friend—good day,' he said absent-mindedly.

And an hour later he rode up to the Casa Perucca, having approached that ancient house by a winding path from the valley below, instead of by the high-road from the Col San Stefano to Olmeta, which runs past its very gate. The Casa Perucca is rather singularly situated, and commands one of the most wonderful views in this wild land of unrivalled prospects. The high-road curves round the lower slope of the mountains as round the base of a sugar-loaf, and is cut at times out of the sheer rock, while a little lower it is begirt by huge trees. It forms as it were a cornice, perched three thousand feet above the valley, over which it commands a view of mountain and bay and inlet, but never a house, never a church, and the farthest point is beyond Calvi, thirty miles away. There is but one spur—a vast buttress of fertile land thrown against the mountain, as a buttress may be thrown against a church tower.

The Casa Perucca is built upon this spur of land, and the Perucca estate—that is to say, the land attached to the Casa (for property is held in small tenures in Corsica)—is all that

lies outside the road. In the middle ages the position would have been unrivalled, for it could be attacked from one side only, and doubtless the Genoese Bank of St. George must have had bitter reckonings with some dead and forgotten rebel, who had his stronghold where the Casa now stands. The present house is Italian in appearance—a long low verandahed house, built in two parts, as if it had at one time been two houses, and only connected later by a round tower, now painted a darker colour than the adjacent buildings. There are occasional country houses like it to be found in Tuscany, notably on the heights behind Fiesole.

The wall defining the peninsula is ten feet high, and is built actually on the roadside, so that the Casa Perucca, with its great wooden gate, turns a very cold shoulder upon its poor neighbours. It is, as a matter of fact, the best house north of Calvi, and the site of it one of the oldest. Its only rival is the Château de Vasselot, which stands deserted down in the valley a few miles to the south, nearer to the sea, and farther out of the world, for no high-road passes near it.

Beneath the Casa Perucca, on the northern slope of the shoulder, the ground falls away rapidly in a series of stony chutes, and to the south and west there are evidences of the land having once been laid out in terraces in the distant days when Corsicans were content to till the most fertile soil in Europe—always excepting the island of Majorca—but now in the wane of the second empire, when every Corsican of any worth had found employment in France, there were none to grow vines or cultivate the olive. There is a short cut up from the valley from the mouldering Château de Vasselot, which is practicable for a trained horse. And Colonel Gilbert must have known this, for he had described a circle in the wooded valley in order to gain it. He must also have been to the Casa Perucca many times before, for he rang the bell suspended outside the door built in the thickness of the southern wall, where a horseman would not have expected to gain admittance. This door was, however, constructed without steps on its inner side—for Corsica has this in common with Spain, that no man walks where he can ride, so that steps are rarely built where a gradual slope will prove more convenient.

There was something suggestive of a siege in the way in which the door was cautiously opened, and a man-servant peeped forth.

'Ah!' he said, with relief, 'it is the Colonel Gilbert. Yes; monsieur may see him, but no one else. Ah! but he is furious, I can tell you. He is in the verandah—like a wild beast. I will take monsieur's horse.'

Colonel Gilbert went through the palms and bamboos and orange-trees alone, towards the house; and there, walking up and down, and stopping every moment to glance towards the door, of which the bell still sounded, he perceived a large stout man, clad in light tweed, wearing an old straw hat, and carrying a thick stick.

'Ah!' cried Perucca, 'so you have heard the news. And you have come, I hope, to apologise for your miserable France. It is thus that you govern Corsica, with a Civil Service made up of a parcel of old women and young counter-jumpers! I have no patience with your prefectures and your young men with flowing neckties and kid gloves. Are we a girls' school to be governed thus? And you—such great soldiers! Yes, I will admit that the French are great soldiers, but you do not know how to rule Corsica. A tight hand, Colonel. Holy name of thunder!' And he stamped his foot with a decisiveness that made the verandah tremble.

The colonel laughed pleasantly.

'They want some men of your type,' he said.

'Ah!' cried Perucca, 'I would rule them, for they are cowards; they are afraid of me. Do you know, they had the impertinence to send one of their threatening letters to poor Andrei before they shot him? They sent him a sheet of paper with a cross drawn on it. Then I knew he was done for. They do not send that *pour rire*.'

He stopped short, and gave a jerk of the head. There was somewhere in his fierce old heart a cord that vibrated to the touch of these rude mountain customs; for the man was a Corsican of long descent and pure blood. Of such the fighting nations have made good soldiers in the past, and even Rome could not make them slaves.

'Or you could do it,' went on Perucca, with a shrewd nod, looking at him beneath shaggy brows. 'The velvet glove—eh? That would surprise them, for they have never felt the touch of one. You, with your laugh and idle ways, and behind them the perception—the perception of the devil—or a woman.'

The colonel had drawn forward a basket chair, and was leaning back in it with crossed legs, and one foot swinging.

'I? Heaven forbid! No, my friend; I require too little. It is only the discontented who get on in the world. But, mind you, I would not mind trying on a small scale. I have often thought I should like to buy a little property on this side of the island, and cultivate it as they do up in Cap Corse. It would be an amusement for my exile, and one could perhaps make the butter for one's bread—green Chartreuse instead of yellow—eh?'

He paused, and, seeing that the other made no reply, continued in the same careless strain.

'If you or one of the other proprietors on this side of the mountains would sell—perhaps.'

But Perucca shook his head resolutely.

'No; we should not do that. You, who have had to do with the railway, must know that. We will let our land go to rack and ruin, we will starve it and not cultivate it, we will let the terraces fall away after the rains, we will live miserably on the finest soil in Europe—we may starve, but we won't sell.'

Gilbert did not seem to be listening very intently. He was watching the young bamboos now bursting into their feathery new green, as they waved to and fro against the blue sky. His head was slightly inclined to one side, his eyes were contemplative.

'It is a pity,' he said, after a pause, 'that Andrei did not have a better knowledge of the insular character. He need not have been in Olmeta churchyard now.'

'It is a pity,' rapped out Perucca, with an emphatic stick on the wooden floor, 'that Andrei was so gentle with them. He drove the cattle off the land. I should have driven them into my own sheds, and told the owners to come and take them. He was too easy-going, too mild in his manners. Look at me—they don't send me their threatening letters. You do not find any crosses chalked on my door—eh?'

And indeed, as he stood there, with his square shoulders, his erect bearing and fiery dark eyes, Mattei Perucca seemed worthy of the name of his untamed ancestors, and was not a man to be trifled with.

'Eh—what?' he asked of the servant who had approached timorously, bearing a letter on a tray. 'For me? Something about Andrei, from those fools of gendarmes, no doubt.'

And he tore open the envelope which Colonel Gilbert had handed to the peasant a couple of hours earlier in the Lancone

Defile. He fixed his eye-glasses upon his nose, clumsily, with one hand, and then unfolded the letter. It was merely a sheet of blank paper, with a cross drawn upon it.

His face suddenly blazed red with anger. His eyes glared at the paper through the glasses placed crookedly upon his nose.

'Holy name!' he cried. 'Look at this—this to *me*! The dogs!'

The colonel looked at the paper with a shrug of the shoulders.

'You will have to sell,' he suggested lightly; and glancing up at Perucca's face, saw something there that made him leap to his feet. 'Holloa! Here,' he said quickly—'sit down.'

And as he forced Perucca into the chair, his hands were already at the old man's collar. And in five minutes, in the presence of Colonel Gilbert and two old servants, Mattei Perucca died.

(*To be continued.*)

